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The **essential** magazine for Amiga enthusiasts

AMIGA SHOPPER

Issue **58** January 1996 **£4.25**



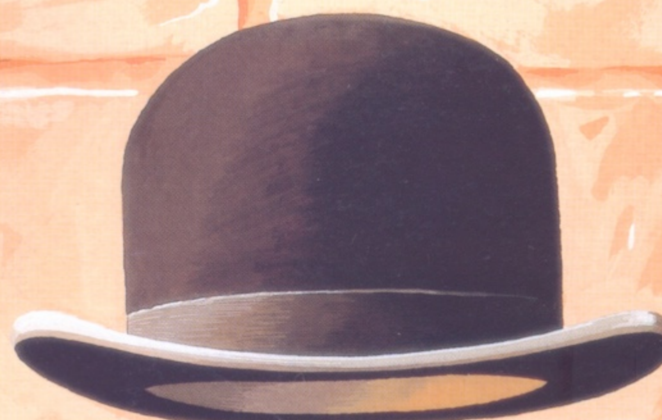
Where is he now?

Whatever happened to David Pleasance? Turn to page 49 to find out!

PowerBase 3.4

A full 5Mb!

Plus much more – see back cover



Get rich!

Be a business success using just your Amiga. We show you how!

Shopper**Reviews**



- M1438S monitor: Amiga Technologies have released a new monitor. We check it out.
- PageStream 3.0h2: The new version of a heavyweight publishing program.
- Organiser 2: The latest version of Digita's personal information manager.
- Edit Plug: KRP's new product is designed to make video editing simple.
- Personal Suite: Cloanto's new CD-ROM with four full programs from their popular range.
- The most recent CD-ROMs reviewed and rated.

Shopper**Tutorials**

3D
Mojo exclusively reveals some of the secrets behind the creation of Babylon 5.

Comms
E-mail is one of the most widely-used applications on the Internet. We tell you how to make the most of it.

DTP
You've decided on your software and prepared your elements, now we learn how to paste up the pages.

AMOS
We explain how to use 3D buttons in your programs and talk about screen zones.



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The Multi-Data Machine gives you a 4X CdRom plus a 650M removable in one half height drive. The Fourth Level software includes the advanced tools for removable media which have until now, only been available on the Mo-Miga (FLD`s top of the range 1.3Gb M.O. system). Ami-FileSafe - the new filing system which has taken the Amiga market place by storm - is also included along with with Full CDRom support.

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AMIGA SHOPPER

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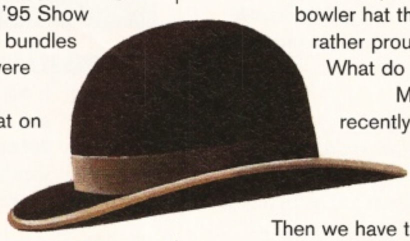
Inside issue

There's good news for all of us this month, news that we've all been waiting for. Amiga Technologies have finally announced the Power Amiga.



At last we have the news of a new Amiga from Amiga Technologies. They have announced plans for development of a Power Amiga. Which is extremely welcome news indeed. It means that the Amiga will finally be able to knock the socks off the Pentium and PowerMac and prove itself to be the superior machine. Turn to our Special Report on page 14 to find out more.

We also have news from the biggest Amiga show in Europe – the Computer '95 Show in Cologne, where Amiga Magic bundles were selling like hot cakes, as were the new Amiga Technologies monitors, which we take a look at on page 41, by the way.



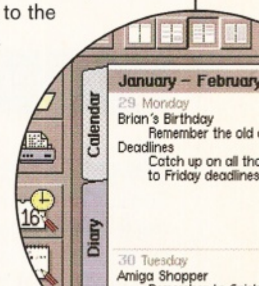
We put the Amiga's Operating System to the test in our feature on page 22. It was the state of the art when the machines first appeared on the market, but 10 years on, how does it compare to Windows95?



And we have an eight-page Supertest of Amiga business software, which explains why I am wearing a bowler hat this month. We are also rather proud of our cover image, too. What do you think?

Mojo has been very busy recently, but we managed to persuade him to write another 3D tutorial for us. Turn to page 60.

Then we have the latest instalments of our Comms, DTP and AMOS tutorial – you'll find some AMOS code linked to the tutorial on our Coverdisks too.



We've been exceedingly busy this month too, partly because David decided to swan off on a rather late Summer holiday to Lanzarote. But we chained him to his Amiga before he went and made him sort through the extensive collection of PD that has amassed beneath his desk, to bring you PD Select.

As well as all this, we have reviews of all the new Amiga products released and news of the stuff about to come on the market.

Oh, and do you remember ex-Commodore top man, David Pleasance? Well, we decided to track him down and found that he has gone into the music business. Read our interview with him on page 49. ■

Sue Grant
Editor

Turn the page for the contents of issue **58**

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AMIGA SHOPPER

ShopperFeatures

Operating Systems 22
Is the Amiga's Operating System better than that of the PC or the Mac? It certainly was the state of the art when the Amiga first hit the streets 10 years ago. **John Kennedy** finds out how it compares to the likes of Windows95 and discovers what needs to be done to keep the Amiga's OS ahead of the competition.

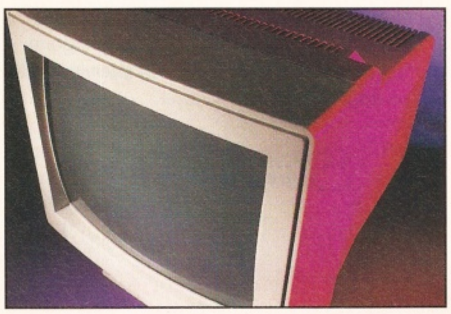
Business Supertest 28
If you want to make a success of your business, your Amiga is the ideal place to start. There are plenty of business software packages available to choose from to help you. **Larry Hickmott** reviews the best of them and advises on all the hardware you need too.

Interview 49
We haven't heard from ex-Commodore managing director, David Pleasance for a long while, so we tracked him down to find out what he is doing now. **Maff Evans** found him at Tangent Music Design.

ShopperReviews

PageStream 3.0h2 38
Soft-Logik has developed PageStream into a world-beating program. **Larry Hickmott** takes a look at the latest version to find out just why this heavyweight desktop publishing program is so good.

M1438S monitor 41
Amiga Technologies have released a new monitor to go with the new Amigas. **Nick Veitch** takes a look at it.



Amiga Technologies' new M1438S monitor is reviewed on page 41.



Mojo explains the secrets of Babylon 5's nebula creation on page 60.

ShopperReviews

Organiser 2 44
It will never replace your mum, but it can organise your life just as well. **John Kennedy** reviews the latest version of Digita's personal information manager.

Edit plug 45
It may not look very impressive, but it can certainly help make your video editing much more professional. **Scott Claymore** takes a good look at KRP Video Services' new Edit Plug.

Personal Suite 46
Cloanto's new CD-ROM contains Personal Paint, Personal SBase, Personal Write and Personal Fonts. **Dave Taylor** spins the disc.

CD-ROMs 47
Another page of the latest and best CD-ROM releases. Find out what **Dave Taylor** has to say about them on page 47.

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ShopperTutorials

3D 60
Mojo is back this month with advice on how to make your space scenes look more realistic. He also reveals a few secrets behind the creation of Babylon 5.

Comms 64
E-mail is one of the most widely-used applications on the Net. **Darren Irvine** explains how to take E-mail beyond simple messages.

DTP 67
By now you will have chosen your software and prepared all your elements. This month **Larry Hickmott** explains how to put them all together on a page.

AMOS 70
Steve Bye of F1 Licenceware is back with his AMOS tutorial. This month he looks at 3D buttons and screen zones. You'll find code to go with this tutorial on the Coverdisks.

ShopperRegulars

Coverdisks 6
The powerful database, PowerBase 3.4, is on Coverdisk 1. Then there's a huge collection of other excellent programs, scenes and utilities.

News 14
A special report from the Computer '95 Show in Cologne. Plus news of the Power Amigas. And all the new Amiga products.

Amiga Answers 50
Win £25 if your image is printed here, so keep your work flowing in! Plus, our experts are at hand to help you solve your Amiga problems.

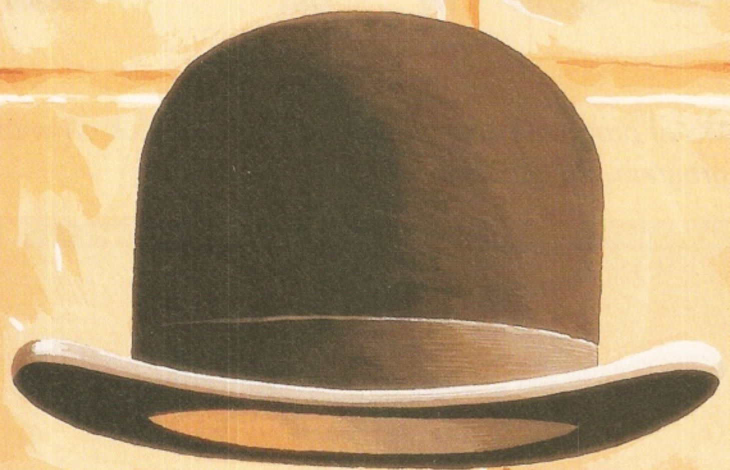
Public Domain 74
We can't believe just how good this section is.

Letters 86
Join in with any of the debates or just tell us what you would like to see in the mag. You could win 25 quid for the letter of the month.

Next month 90
There's another action-packed issue of Amiga Shopper next month. The February 1996 issue is on sale on Thursday, 11th January.



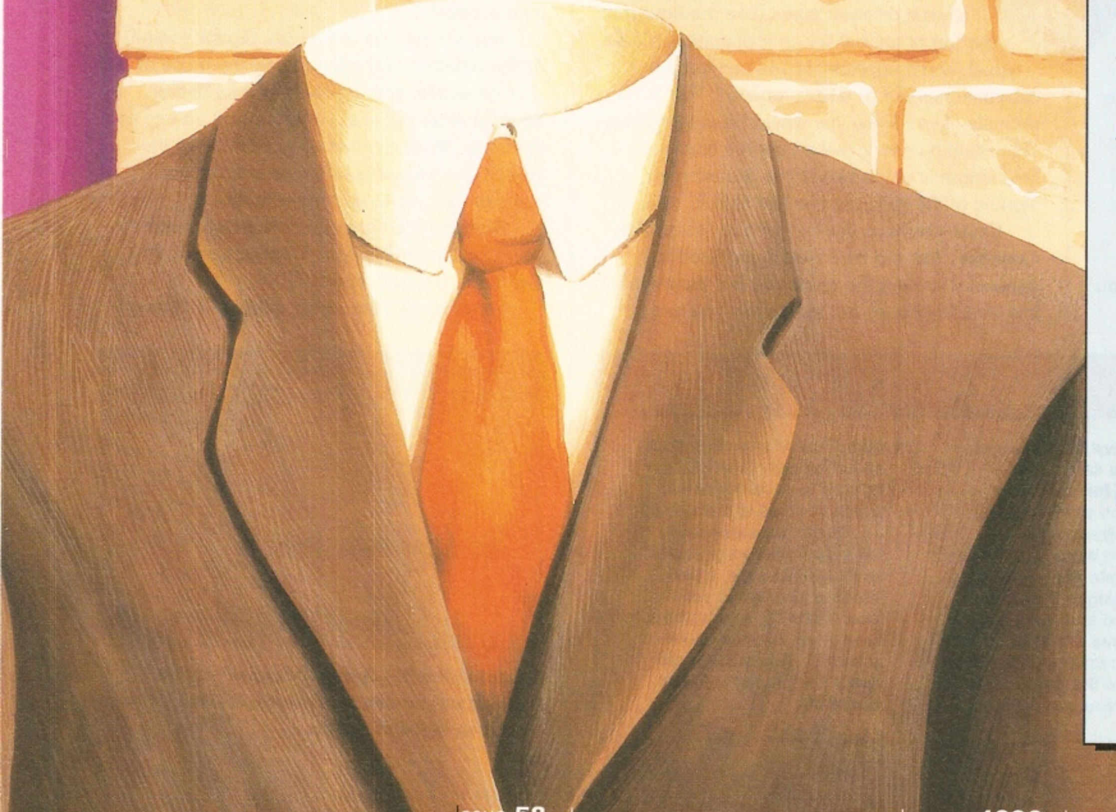
The unstylish, but extremely useful Edit Plug is put through its paces on page 45.



Page 28

Get rich!

Be a business success using just your Amiga. We show you how!



Shopper**Disks**

We've done it again! We've found you 5Mb of the most useful programs and utilities around and put them on our two Coverdisks this month:

PowerBase 3.4 ____ 6
On Coverdisk 1 we have a powerful database program from OTM. PowerBase 3.4 compliments our business Supertest on page 28.

3D**Zone** ____ 10
If you bought Amiga Format's November issue and played with their Real 3D Classic Coverdisk, you will appreciate these complete scenes for use in any version of Real 3D..

Application**Zone** ____ 10
Remdate II and Browser II were both featured in our PD Select section last month. They were so good we gave them Star buys and put them on our disks!

Technical**Zone** ____ 10
This month we have 12 commands to improve your use of Shell.

Licence**Ware** ____ 11
A fully useable demo of GrAC 2, the graphical adventure game creator.

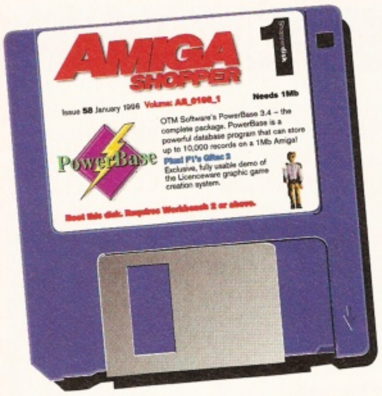
Creative**Zone** ____ 11
For Amiga musicians we have a collection of Mod Utilities.

Programming**Zone** _ 11
This month we have AMOS code for those following our AMOS tutorial, plus Total Impact Map Editor.

Utility**Zone** ____ 12
Four utilities: FastView II, Noisome; WBExt and XList.

Information**Zone** ____ 12
The User Groups and PD Directory.

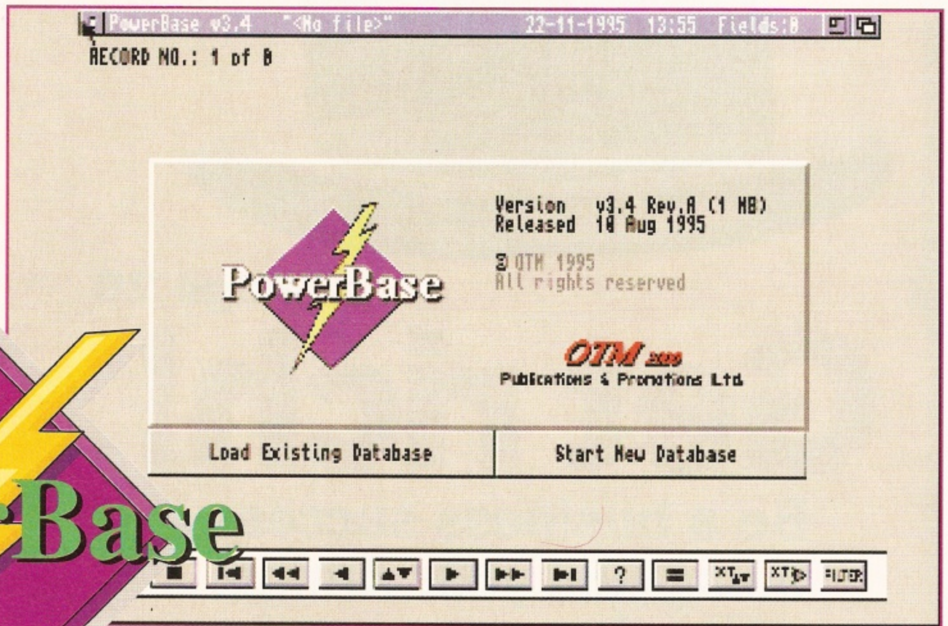




Disk 1

Our Coverdisks this month have an incredible 5Mb of programs and utilities on them. To kick off with, Coverdisk 1 contains OTM's powerful database program, PowerBase 3.4.

Information is power, and you will have more power at your fingertips than the National Grid when you have mastered PowerBase 3.4. We have procured this incredibly useful database program from OTM which will soon have you cataloguing your entire collection of Amiga Shoppers, music CDs or even digitised pictures of your cornflake collection.



PowerBase 3.4

PowerBase is a powerful database program which can be configured for almost any situation. Data can be easily entered, saved, retrieved and sent to a printer for a hard copy. You can even include graphic files and then password-protect the information.

To create a database from scratch, run PowerBase and select the "Create a New Database" option. You will then need to enter a general name (for example "Amiga Shopper Back Issues") and a note to remind you what the database will contain.

Now you need to define the various fields which each record in the database will contain. It's wise to spend some time planning these, because they will dictate how useful your database will be: and how much information you will have to enter.

Each field can be of several different types (see the boxout at the top of page 8 for an explanation of field types), and if appropriate you can set the maximum number of letters required. For example, if you knew you would be entering two-digit issue numbers, make sure the Numeric field length is set to two. If you are entering months of the year, set the Text field to nine.

Once you have decided on the fields, click Continue. You will be asked if you need to password-protect the database. For the moment it is best to choose not to, in case you forget the code word to your first database and can't gain access!

You will then be shown the record screen. At the moment, you will see only the name of your database, and the fields of information. You can enter information by clicking on one of the fields. Move the mouse pointer down the screen and you will see a new box pop up: you can use this to add more records.

Pressing the right cursor key also creates a new blank record for you. Continue entering a few more example records.

From the System menu, select the "Design

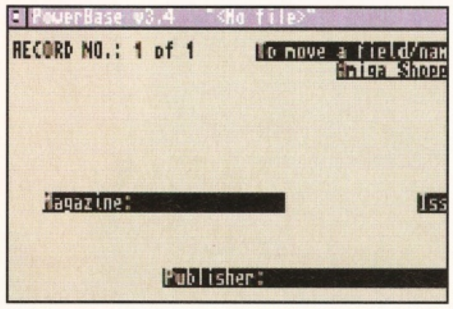
What is a database anyway?

A database is a collection of information arranged in a particular way. Once stored, the information can be sorted, searched or printed.

Think of a collection of paper files, each containing information on one item: for example a CD from your music collection. The details of each CD is called a "record", and PowerBase displays each record on screen at once. You can create a template for the record before you start entering data. Each record is composed of several "fields", for example the name of the CD, the singer, the date purchased and the price. All these items are entered into their own information fields.

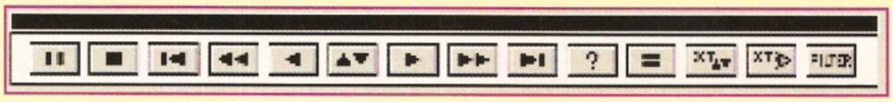
When the data has been entered, you can perform complicated searches such as listing only those CDs bought in 1994 or those which cost more than £9.99.

There are many uses for a database as powerful as PowerBase 3.4, from keeping records of your local Darts Club to helping to keep track of your home accounts. PowerBase can easily handle these tasks and more.



Choosing the "Design New Format" option means that you can drag the fields around the screen to reposition them.

Using the control panel



The slider bar above the control panel can be used to move quickly through your records. Click on it to move left and right through them.

Pause: *Use when rewinding or fast-forwarding.*

Stop: *Use when rewinding or fast-forwarding.*

Goto first record.

Rewind records.

Previous record.

Edit current record: *When editing a record you can use the up and down cursor keys to move between the fields.*

Next record.

Fast forward records.

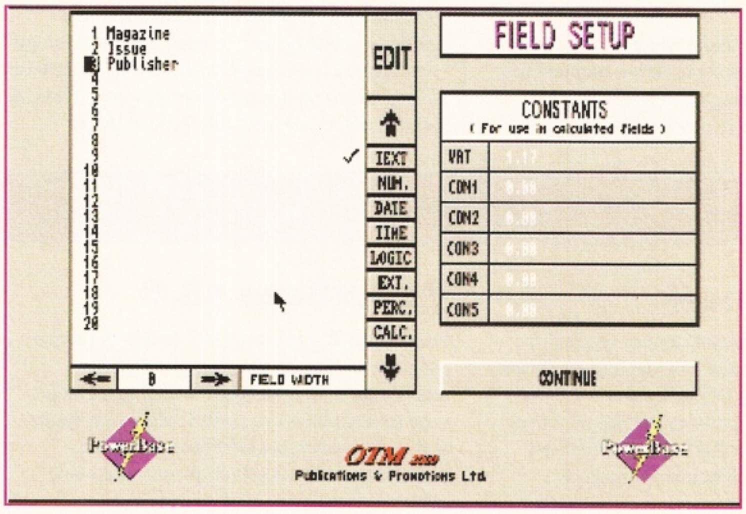
Goto last record.

Search: *You have to enter into each field the part of that field you wish to search for from the current record.*

Exact search: *You have to enter into each field the exact field data you wish to search for from the current record.*

If one of the fields you have set up is of type EXTERNAL you will be presented with the file requester and asked to choose an IFF picture or an ASCII text file to put into this field.

XT View: *This displays an IFF picture or ASCII text file from an EXTERNAL field, if you have one set up.*

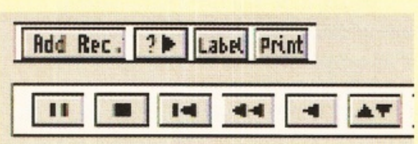


Select the "Create a New Database" option and then define the various fields which you want each record in your database to contain.

New Form Layout" option. Now you can drag the fields about the screen and position them until they make the most sense. You may want the issue number and month together on the same line for example.

Locating your records is easy. You can either use the left and right cursor buttons to look through each one in turn, or use the video recorder-style buttons at the bottom. The Question Mark button is used to search for a record: type in as much as you can remember (or nothing) into the fields as they pop up and the database searches for records which are close to what you entered. Use the "equals sign" button when you need to search for an exact match.

The extra menu



There is a special, floating extra button panel which appears when your mouse pointer is moved to the bottom of the screen. This menu is displayed if you have the preference option turned on and it contains the following options:

Add Rec. **This will automatically move to the end of your database and begin adding a record for you.**

Find next is used when you are using either of the two searches.

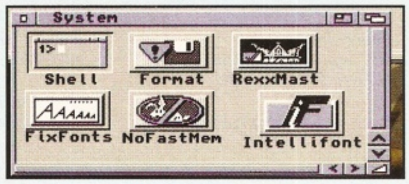
Label prints the current record.

Print **Prints the current record. Use the printer preferences to alter the way labels and printed records are output.**

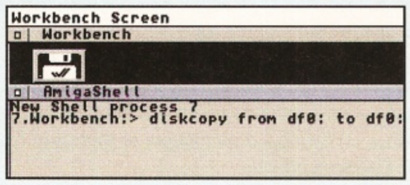
Beginners, look!



Before using either of this month's Coverdisks, please be sure to back them up – just in case. Simply follow the easy instructions below.



1 ***Boot up from your Workbench disk or partition, double-click on your Shell icon – to be found in your System Drawer.***



2 ***If you only have one disk drive, type in the following line and then press Return.***

`Diskcopy from DF0: to DF0:`

If you have two drives, place the Coverdisk in DF0: and a blank in DF1:, then type in this line instead:

`Diskcopy from DF0: to DF1:`

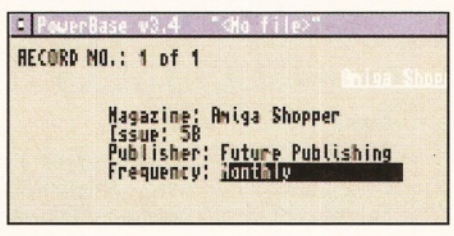
3 ***Follow the on-screen prompts and remember that the Coverdisk is the source disk and the blank is the destination.***

4 ***If you used the two-drive method, remember to rename the copy by clicking on its icon and pressing right-Amiga r.***

5 ***If you have two drives, you can also copy the disk from Workbench by dragging the Coverdisk icon over the destination disk's.***

6 ***Then place either of the Coverdisks in DF0: and reset the Amiga to boot it. It is best to boot disk 1 (or the Subs disk if you're a subscriber). This will let you install all the disks to either floppy or hard drive.***

The buttons marked XT are used to deal with eXTernal images or text files. The first edits the EXT field and allows you to enter the filename and path to the picture or text. The second allows you to view the image or text when you are examining the records. Remember that the picture or text file itself is not included in the database, only the link to its name and position.



Set the maximum number of letters required, if appropriate for your entries.

▶ 8

Field types

Text **Text: Allows text, numbers and special characters. Up to 60 characters are allowed in one field.**

Num **Numeric: Allows numbers and special characters.**
Up to 60 numbers are allowed in one field.

Date **3) Date: A date in the format dd-mm-yyyy, for example (20-08-1992)**

Time **Time: A time in 24hr format HH:MM for example (23:30)**

Logic **Logical: Y or N for Yes or No, or T or F for True or False.**

Ext **External: Allows an IFF picture or ASCII text file to be loaded into a record. 40-character file name.**

Perc **Percentage: Range from 0 to 100 per cent.**

Calc **Calculation: Allows calculation of fields from others using numeric values and constants. You can use this option to perform operations such as adding VAT to a list of purchases.**

The final button is the Filter option. This is where you can perform detailed and complex search operations. Click on the field you wish to search on, and then select an operation (greater than, less than, equal to).

For example, you could list all issues of magazines greater than 50, or all those with a feature on networking. The resulting list can either be displayed on screen, or stored to file, or sent to a printer.

There are many more features and options available in PowerBase 3.4 than we could cover here. For more information you should consult the comprehensive help files which are available from the pull-down menu. These files go through all the menu options individually, as well as providing plenty of general help and advice.

Home finances

Here a short example to demonstrate how you could use PowerBase to keep track of your finances. Create a database, and make the first field the date, the second a text field and the third a number. The text field is going to hold a description of your purchases and the numeric field the price. Now add a fourth field, and make this a calculation. Assuming the price was entered into field F3, enter the following into the calculation box:

```
F3*VAT
```

VAT is an internal constant, which is set over on the right-hand of the screen. At the moment the default is 1.175 (although this was written before the Budget so it may have changed).

There are other constants you can use to, such as postage and packing or handling charges.

When you start entering details into the records, the fourth field will automatically be calculated as the product of field three (F3) and the VAT constant. There is no need for you to have to work it out.

After entering a few records, you may be wondering exactly how much you have spent on computer hardware over the year. You can then use the "Calculation" from the "Option" menu. You can decide to sum the totals with the Addition menu option, or even find the average amount you have spent. In either case, you'll be asked which field you wish to process: and you should select either of the Price fields. ■

Dodgy disk?

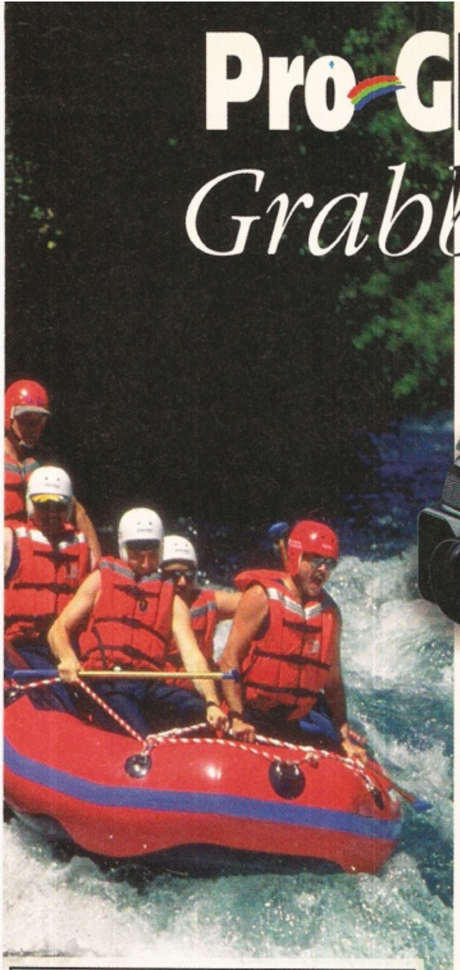
To avoid errors when installing to floppies, ensure that your destination disks are of high quality. If an error occurs, try re-booting and using a different spare disk – the majority of errors are caused by faulty destination disks.

If your Coverdisk absolutely refuses to work and you are certain it is faulty, please return it, along with an S.A.E., to:

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STAGE 1...
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Grab images with your camcorder including S-VHS...

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or, Use the signal from your satellite receiver...

or, Grab TV or video pictures from your VCR's video output including S-VHS.



STAGE 2...
With ProGrab's software, select an image you wish to capture using the on screen preview window and Grab (because the hardware grabs frames in real time, there's no need for a freeze frame facility on the source device!). Once grabbed, simply download and view the full image on your Amiga screen. ProGrab also includes a Teletext viewing and capturing facility from either TV or satellite sources.

STAGE 3...
Use the 'grabbed' image with your favourite word processor, DTP or graphics package.

ProGrab **really does** make it that simple!

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ProGrab™...
Supports all recent Amigas and is also fully AGA Chipset compatible. You can render images in any Workbench screen mode resolution including HAM8 mode (Amiga RAM permitting).

ProGrab™...
Saves and Loads images in IFF/ILBM, IFF/ILBM24, JPEG, BMP, PCX, and TARGA file formats. ProGrab saves animations as Anim5 files and animations with sound (requires PCMCIA interface and separate sound sampler) as Anim5 + 8SVX files. A range of image processing effects, palette computing routines (AGA only) and dithering methods are also new to ProGrab Version 2.5.x Photogenics fully supports ProGrab with a custom 'Loader' to enable grabs directly from within the program - saving YOU time!

ProGrab™...
Software has built in mono and colour animation facilities. The number of frames is dependant upon your Amiga's RAM.

ProGrab™...
Release 2.5.x software now includes...

- SUPPORT FOR VIRTUAL MEMORY
Allows the highest resolutions - Even with low memory Amigas (All Hard Drive Systems without the need for an MMU, requiring just 1Mb. Hard Drive Space).
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(*Standard ProGrab hardware is PAL/SECAM/NTSC compatible. Interlace mode options are available with PAL & SECAM only. NTSC Only models are available to special order which then support the interlace mode fully. Please ask us for full details.)

For just £129.95...

ProGrab is supplied with everything you'll need ✣...

- **ProGrab™ 24RT Plus Digitiser**
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ProGrab's optional PCMCIA Interface includes the latest version software and extends performance for serious/professional users - offering the following benefits...

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ProGrab™ supports any Amiga with Kickstart 2.04 or later & a minimum of 1.5Mb. free RAM.

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Shopper Choice

Each month ShopperChoice brings you the choicest cuts from the PD, Shareware and Licenceware world. ***David Taylor*** *serves up this month's platter for you to tuck into.*

There are only so many ways to introduce a set of unbelievably excellent Coverdisks and over the last six months I've used every one I can think of. So, in short, this month's ShopperChoice disk is just as heavingly packed as ever, with useful programs separated into sensible zones. If you think I'm making it up, take a look for yourself.

3DZone

Our sister magazine Amiga Format recently gave away the complete Real 3D package (AF77), thus re-awakening interest in the program. It seemed appropriate to search out some objects that users of this program could play with.

This month's zone has two complete scenes for use in Real 3D in any version from the one given away with Amiga Format onwards. The scenes are loaded in by choosing the animation load from the program and then redirecting the program to the individual parts that it needs (because it looks in a different place). It's very simple, just select the file of the name it is looking for from the appropriate directory in this zone. (Don't worry, it makes sense when you are doing it). The scenes are the ones pictured below: that of a room and a car. Just shows that Real 3D is a powerful program that brings real 3D to even lower-end machines.





Get real! Two full scenes that you can use in any version of Real 3D, including the full "Classic" version that was given away by Amiga Format. So, if you've got the program, but you haven't managed to get very far – these scenes could help!

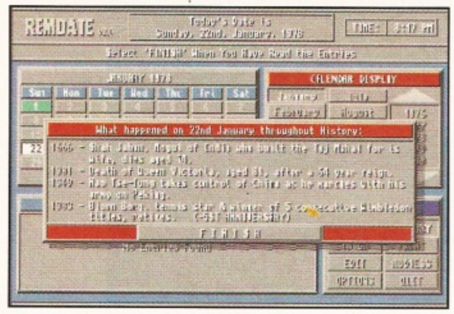
ApplicationZone

You will find two cracking programs in this zone – both of which were given Star buy awards in last month's PD Select.

Remdate II

Remdate II is like an advanced diary for your computer. The program can be used to store addresses, birthdays and all the general rubbish that you jot down in your paper filofax. In addition, the program has a few bells and whistles that give you things like a quote for the day or a list of historical events from that date.

Using the program is incredibly simple. Just load it up and off you go. Then choose the date that you want to add an event to. You can add the text for the event in and then choose the type of event that it should be. You can also choose whether an address should be linked to the event and how many days or weeks beforehand you'd like to be reminded of it. If you want to install the program to hard disk, even if you have already de-archived it to a hard disk, you should use the installation icon, but double-click on the Click Me First icon before doing it. The data can be saved, but note that although this program is the full version and not crippled, it is still Shareware and you should register it. The details are given in the documentation.



Remdate II is more than just an electronic diary.

Browser II

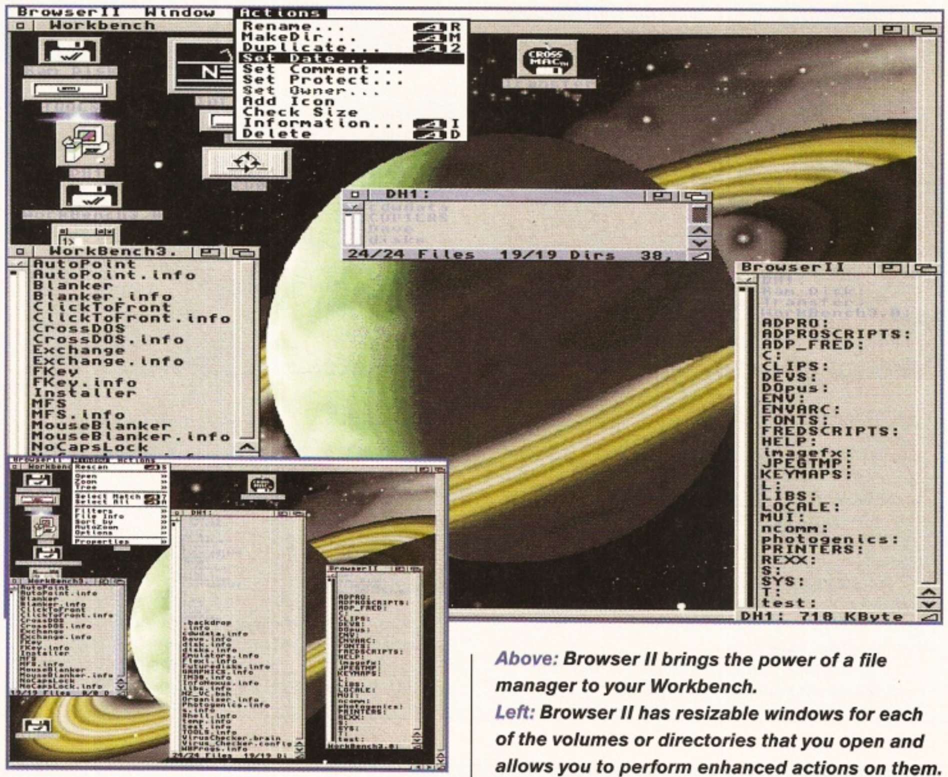
I included this program in the Internet Select section of PD Select last month and said, "I can't recommend this highly enough", then gave it 95 per cent! Because of the distribution requirements, we've had to wait for permission to include it before putting it on our Coverdisk. Everything is hunky-dorey now and so everyone, with or without access to the Internet, can use this fantastic file manager.

Browser II is different from other file managers in that it becomes a part of your Workbench screen. Then, instead of opening a normal Workbench window, you can open one through Browser II, which gives you access to all the special features. The program takes many of the ideas of Workbench, like 'rename' and improves them, such as allowing multiple files and wildcards. Should a program not be available from WB, it will offer to open a Shell.

"Perhaps people will realise that there is an alternative to Directory Opus," was the comment of one of the authors. There are extensive documents that you should read and remember to comply with the Shareware concept.

TechnicalZone

There are a dozen excellent commands here which can be used to improve your use of Shell. To use them, copy the command to your c: directory or other command path used.



Above: ***Browser II brings the power of a file manager to your Workbench.***
Left: ***Browser II has resizable windows for each of the volumes or directories that you open and allows you to perform enhanced actions on them.***

- **Autoassign** is not another Assign manager, but rather a program designed to compliment these programs. It can take all the user assigns that installed software makes and add what in effect is a defer option as well as deferring mounting from a mountlist until required.
- **Coldreboot** is a command that allows you to order a reboot from the Shell. There are two versions, one of which requires verifying. These are useful in scripts, but make sure you know what you are doing, or you might end up ordering a reboot you didn't intend.
- **Dfree** is a simple command that gives you a plain English readout of the amount of free space on a disk or drive. If you ask how much space is available, you'll be told in either bytes, kilobytes or megabytes.
- **Erp** allows you to set your computer to cancel certain requesters automatically. It allows reasonable configuration, so that it is more powerful than just cancelling all requesters.
- **MCommands** is a collection of eight CLI commands from the same author, Michael Letowski. **Bootlog** records the time and reason of reboots, which is useful for owners of BBSs. **Changefont** allows you to globally replace the default Topaz font. **Clickstart** enables certain features of AmigaDOS. **Examine** makes use of datatypes to determine the nature of a file. **For** allows the execution of a command with multiple arguments and **RXControl** controls the ARexx interpreter. **Time** can measure the execution time of a command and **Touch** allows you to modify the date stamp on a file or program.

Disk contributions

This month's disks were compiled using files from Aminet and from Walton's Mountain BBS, ☎ 0181 891 5730, and with the help of the authors of the programs.

If you would like to contribute to a future disk, whether it's a full application, utility, 40K demo, clipart, font, 3D object, or even a module, send it to:

David Taylor,
Amiga Shopper Coverdisk Contributions,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Please only send the minimum distribution archive. Also, please do not powerpack (or similar) any files because it detracts from the archiving.

Creative**Zone**

The Creative Zone contains a collection of programs called Mod Utilities. These are programs for use by Amiga musicians. There's more than half a dozen programs that allow you to do anything from simply playing a module to ripping one from memory allowing you to try and recover music that some games may have left in memory after a reset.

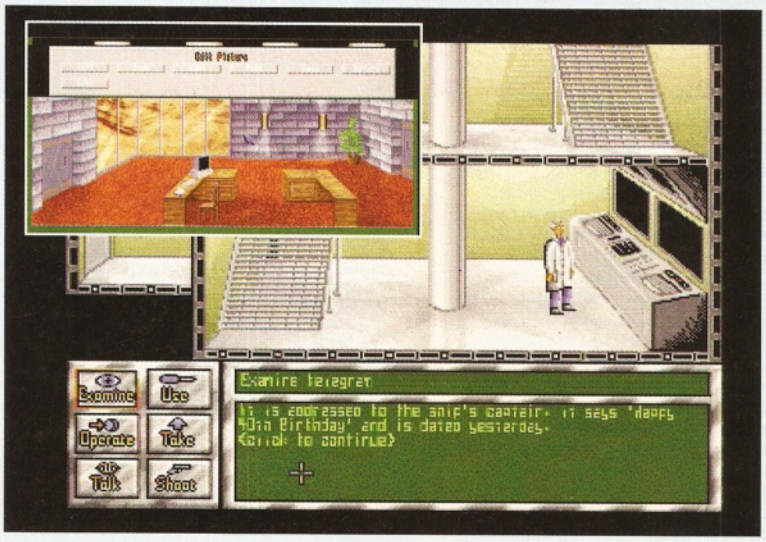
Programming**Zone**

T.I.M.E.

In addition to the AMOS code that is here for the readers who are following our tutorial (see page 70), there is a program called Total Impact Map Editor. If you are trying to program a game, you may find that you want to use a map editor to create the actual levels. This program has been used to create levels for games like Sensible World Of Soccer.

It works like other map editors and allows you to load IFF images in so that you can design the elements in a paint package of your choice. Although you can get to grips with it by

Licenceware: GrAC 2 demo



This is a fully usable demo of the graphical adventure game creator, which allows even those with no programming know-how to create "point and click" adventure games.

The first version of GrAC is one of F1 Licenceware's most popular programs, and so we wangled this exclusive demo from their sweaty paws.

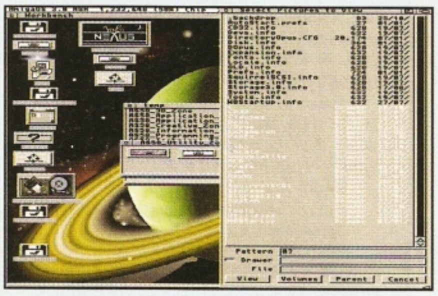
The demo incudes a few tutorial rooms for you to work through and you can also try out any of your own rooms, by creating the graphics in a paint package like Deluxe Paint. There are full documents to explain how to use the package and there is also the all-important GrAC player included that allows you to actually test the game that you have created.

For the full version of GrAC 2 which lets you create games of multiple screens contact F1 on ☎ 01392 493580.

Top left: ***The tutorial room supplied, but you'll soon be creating your own rooms.***
Left: ***GrAC 2 has been used to create games like this one called Lethal Formula.***
Right: ***GrAC 2 is very simple to get to grips with.***

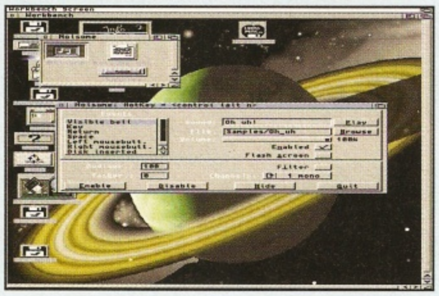


Utility Zone



FastView II

Blimey, not another picture viewer! Wait! This program is one of the fastest we've ever seen – even at decoding JPEGs, whilst retaining acceptable quality. It can be used from either the Shell or Workbench and there are versions optimized for 68000 and 68020+ machines. FastView can optionally dither images to provide the best view possible and can scale pictures to the screen size, making it easier to view pictures that are too big for the screen. The program needs installing, which can be done through the installer script provided.

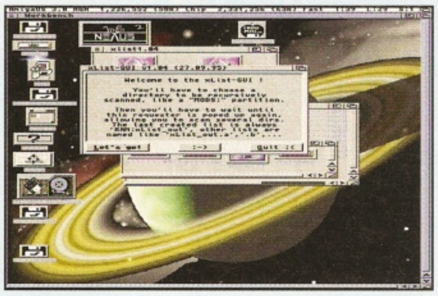


Noisome

A bit of light relief is provided by this program. Using Noisome, you can start to make a bit of noise with your Amiga, making the keyboard play a sample for certain events – it is very simple to make it sound like a manual typewriter, for example.

There are some samples included in the sample drawer of this program, but you can easily assign your own. The GUI makes using this program very easy.

I guarantee that it will raise a smile from even the most serious amongst us.



WBExt

A program that has made it into my hallowed WBStartUp drawer. It changes the WB information line to give much more information, such as libraries and tasks, and can also flush unused libraries and order a reboot. Very good.

XList

If you end up examining lots of files (like myself) and could really use something that helps identify filetypes – like those that have been powerpacked – then this program is a gift.

playing around, I would advise reading the documentation. This program is Shareware, so do register if you make use of it.

Information Zone

The Information Zone contains two documents that are constantly updated by Amiga Shopper. They are a listing of User Groups from around the world and also the incredibly popular PD Directory, which details all the PD Houses with the services they provide and prices they charge. It is the most comprehensive listing of its kind. Both the documents are provided in two formats, one is in plain ASCII and the other is an AmigaGuide.

Should you want to change the reader, you can do this in the Icon information (click once on the icon, then select Information from the Icon menu on Workbench; you can then change the default tool). If you have real problems, you can always read the ASCII in any word processor.

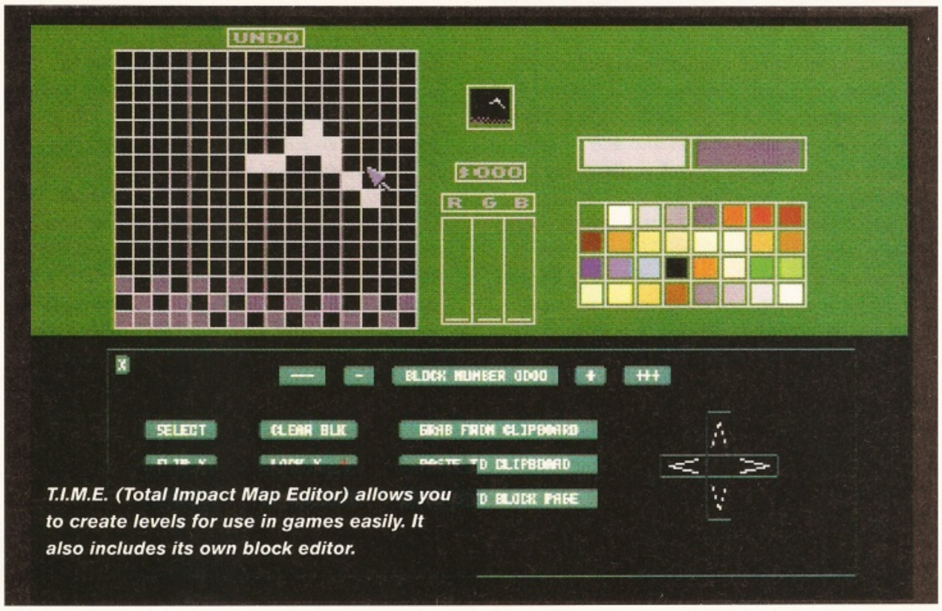
If you want your organisation to be added to either of the listings, simply send the details to us – there is information on how to do this in the documents and the ReadMe, but please submit your details on disk if at all possible.

Don't forget to send in your contributions for inclusion on our Coverdisks! ■

Shareware notice!

Remember that a number of the programs on these Coverdisks are some form of Shareware. Amiga Shopper has compiled both disks with the help of the authors, who have received no fee from us.

So, if you keep and use these programs, you *must* register. Some people only want a postcard, so *please* put in the effort. They did when they created the program.



T.I.M.E. (Total Impact Map Editor) allows you to create levels for use in games easily. It also includes its own block editor.

Subscribers' Disk



Come off it. We've got to be joking, haven't we? A full third disk FREE and exclusive every month for our subscribers. Well, we're not. This month's disk contains the latest version of ABackup, the fully-featured back-up program that has been given a complete facelift. Then, there's HippoPlayer 2.20, the module player raved about by Amiga Format that can do everything– even play archived modules!

The freely distributable version of Power Procedures is an essential add-on for AMOS, which we scored highly last month in PD Select and which we talk about in this month's AMOS tutorial (page 70). That's without mentioning the other programs, like HDEnv for replacing the memory-hungry Env: with a version on your hard drive, or the Imagine object or the clipart or the chip tunes or the... You get the picture.

So, if you want to save money off the cover price of AS, if you want a FREE third disk every month, and if you want a cool Subscribers' Newsletter, then take advantage of our exclusive Subscribers' offers. Phone our Subscription hotline now on ☎ 01225 822511.

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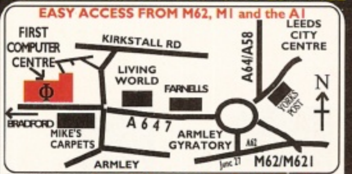
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News

This month in Amiga Shopper's news pages: the Power Amiga announced; a special report from the Computer '95 Show in Cologne; Silica have a new owner; plus loads more!

Special Report



The Amiga is back in production and it has reappeared on the shelves of many retail outlets all over the globe, but this doesn't mean that its future is assured as a serious computing platform. Why? Because even though the Amiga's custom chipset-based architecture is more advanced than most PCs it is sadly lacking in one respect – speed. There is no denying it, the Amiga needs a serious speed boost if it is going to hold its own against its Pentium and PowerMac competition.

Until recently, Amiga Technologies have been evasive when questions have lead to their plans to improve the performance of the three-year-old AGA machines (the A1200 and A4000). Unlike Commodore who made known plans for projects that had not begun, Amiga Technologies have not made hasty announcements to mollify the Amiga press and users. Instead, they have gone away, done their research and then said, here, this is what the future of the Amiga will be. And that future will be the Power Amiga.

In an announcement made at the Video Toaster Expo in LA, and later at the Computer '95 show in Cologne, Germany, Petro Tyschtschenko, President of Amiga Technologies, revealed that the next generation of Amigas will be based upon Motorola's PowerPC processors.



The Computer '95 Show attracted 50, 000+ people.

The first step

Work has been underway for some time on integrating the Amiga Operating System with this RISC-based processor and we should see the first Power Amigas from Amiga Technologies in the first quarter of 1997. However, this is just a first step because Mr. Tyschtschenko commented; "Our pre-emptive multitasking Operating System Amiga OS will be ported to the PowerPC platform first. Our goal is to make our OS hardware independent to allow further ports on other platforms".

This is exciting news and shows a clear distinction between the operation methods of Commodore and Amiga Technologies, as Petro's further comments highlight; "We have a clear business plan: We do things consequently, step by step. First we ramped up the production and set up an organisation to handle the Amiga market and satisfy the demand. Now that we have achieved this successfully, we focus on research and development to bring new and better products on the market.

Some of the things that separated the Computer '95 Show from most other events were the announcement of plans for the Power Amiga generation of machines and a new board that will upgrade existing machines to PowerPC processors. One of the biggest sellers at the show was the Amiga Magic bundle.

> "We have a **clear** business plan. We do things step by step."

"One of the mistakes the former Commodore made was to do too many things at a time, they made too many promises and therefore lost focus on important aspects of its business. We have learned from these mistakes and won't repeat them. Commitments and promises are nice, but facts are better." Well, that should give you an idea of Amiga Technologies' grand plan, but what will this mean to Amiga users?

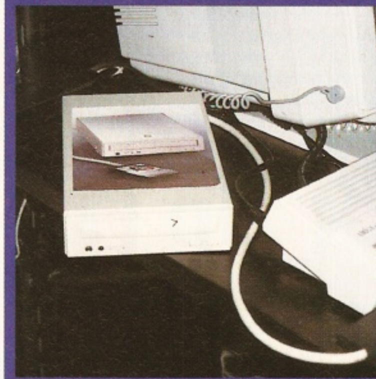
As mentioned earlier, the Amiga will be able to run a lot faster with the PowerPC chip as it, the 604, can run at speeds in excess of 100MHz. Obviously, this is good news for people involved in graphics, multimedia and other processor-hungry tasks.

The new range of Amigas will

also be backwards-compatible, so there will be no problem running current software. However, there will be an added advantage, because the 604 chip is good at emulating other CPUs – it will be possible to make the next generation of Amigas compatible with PC software. Although we have a healthy supply of software, it would be nice to able to run software such as Adobe Photoshop on an Amiga.

However, these days seem a long way off, which is why Amiga Technologies have been working covertly with the German peripheral manufacturer Phase V – the people responsible for the Blizzard range of accelerators and Cybervision 64 display card. This has resulted in the development of a Power PC upgrade board that should be available at some time during the first quarter of 1996.

So, the Amiga's future is looking very good. The Amiga will get the speed increase it needs, and owners of existing machines will be able upgrade. And it will still be an Amiga complete with AmigaDOS and Workbench. ■





Above: The Squirrel MPEG unit, with a CD-ROM drive, playing FMV CDs without the aid of an Amiga.
Left: The Q-drive 1241 CD-ROM drive is hot stuff.

Computer '95 Show

The Computer '95 Show, (Cologne, Germany, 10-12 November), was not simply staged to announce Amiga Technologies' plans for a new range of Amigas, it also happens to be the biggest Amiga show in Europe. It had a staggering attendance of over 25,000, just on the Saturday.

There was an astounding number of new products on display, both software and hardware. Although nominally an all-format show, the overwhelming number of people wearing Amiga T-shirts and the fact that barely half a dozen of the stands were PC or Mac-related left no doubt as to the purpose of the show – buying Amiga stuff.

The Amiga stand attracted one of the largest crowds because several new products were on display, including the A4000T, Virtual Reality i-glasses, the Q-drive 1241 CD-ROM drive, music and networking software, and an all-new C++ compiler.

The busiest bit of the stand was the network area where several Amigas linked via the latest version of Interworks' ENLAN-DFS hardware and their I-Net 225 and T-Net software. The ENLAN-DFS adds Ethernet connectivity through the A1200's PCMCIA port, while I-Net uses the TCP/IP protocol to connect to the Net. Of great interest to 3D buffs was the T-Net LightWave render farm software which makes sharing rendering projects between machines easy.

As there has been a shortage of C++ compilers it was little wonder that the Amigas running the new Storm C compiler were packed with eager programmers. We can expect to see Storm C shipping in its international version early in the first quarter of 1996.

Surprisingly, there were more people viewing the i-glasses than the Q-drive. This may be because most serious German Amiga users already have a CD-ROM drive.

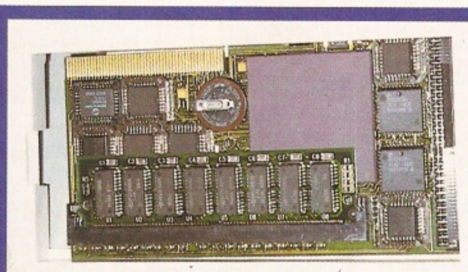


Jordi La Forge eat your heart out – the VR i-glasses in action.

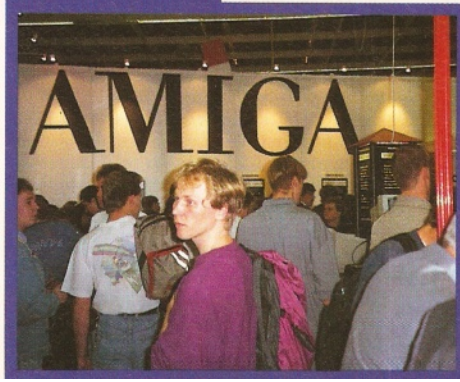
"There was an astounding number of new products on display."

Phase V drew another large crowd – they stole the limelight last year. Last time it was for the Cyberstorm and Cybervision, this time it was the Blizzard 1260 – a Cyberstorm for the A1200 – and the Power Up accelerator.

The Power Up is the board developed hand in hand with Amiga Technologies to upgrade existing machines to Power PC compatibility and performance. The first board should be ready for distribution early in 1996 and will be based on the Motorola MPC603e processor. This RISC-based processor accelerates an Amiga to 100MHz. A later board based on the MPC604 is expected to run at 150MHz. The first board will be for the A4000 – boards for the A1200 and A3000 will follow. The board will operate on a 64-bit Local Bus system which allows for fast data transfer.



Hmm... A prototype of the Blizzard 1260 060-based accelerator. The final version will be smaller.



The Amiga Technologies stand was jam-packed with people waiting for the new A4000T and several peripherals.

The 1260 Blizzard also drew attention. The 1260 is the A1200 version of the amazing Cyberstorm 060-based accelerator – that can boost the computing power of the A1200 to over 80MIPS (Million Instruction Per Second). This is two to three times faster than most 040-based accelerators and a real blessing for A1200 owners into 3D graphics. The final version of the board will be smaller and Phase V are now waiting for more of the 060 chips from Motorola before they go into full production.

The busiest software stand was Maxon's who had a variety of exciting programs on display. Chief among these was Cinema 4D v3 Pro. Version 3 has several enhancements including lens flares, inverse kinematics with limited movement and an incredible speed increase of between 2 and 10 times faster depending on the scene complexity. There are also three new expansion modules: CinemaWorld – for creating landscapes, CinemaFont – for converting Type 1 fonts to smooth 3D objects and CinemaTree – a fractal tree generator.

Other Maxon products were DiskMAGIC, MaxonMAGIC, a collection of professional quality objects for Cinema 4D and MaxonMULTIMEDIA. Also there was a new organiser based on Twist 2. It uses the power and flexibility of Twist, and it will be available as a stand-alone too.

Things are certainly looking up in Germany and a show like this would do wonders for the English market, but hopefully we'll have the World Of Amiga Show, which should be taking place sometime in March, but Amiga Technologies couldn't confirm the dates or venue as we went to press. More news as soon as we can! ■



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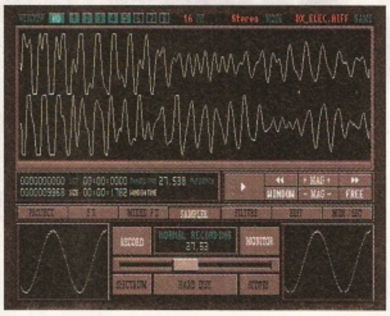


Disk Magic £39.95

Newly released, Disk Magic (screenshot on the left), is the ultimate file and disk management utility for your Amiga. DiskMAGIC makes every task you perform - from the copying of a file, to the extraction of an archived file, as simple as a clicking on a button! In fact, after using DiskMAGIC, you'll wonder how you ever used you Amiga without it!

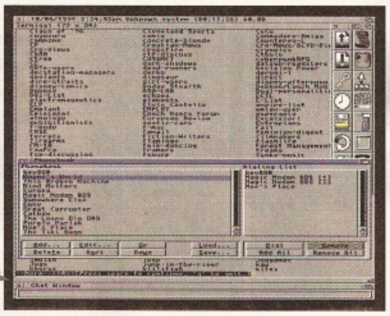
DiskMAGIC is exceptionally configurable, with the ability to alter window layout, file types, action buttons, fonts, screen mode, archive handling, viewers and more.

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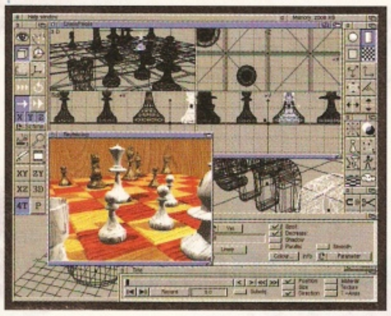
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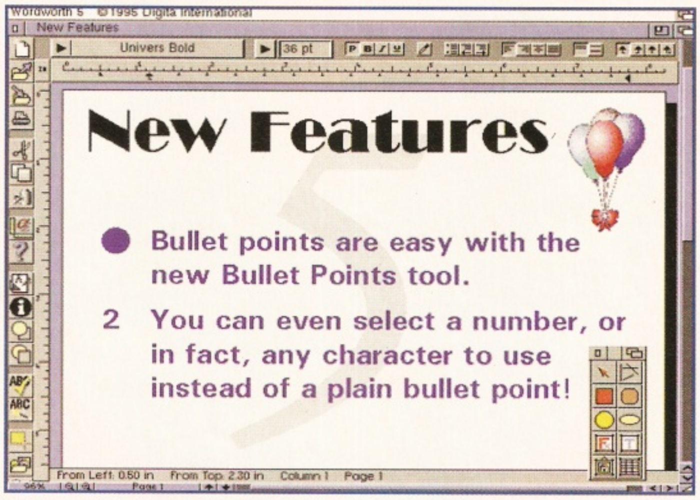
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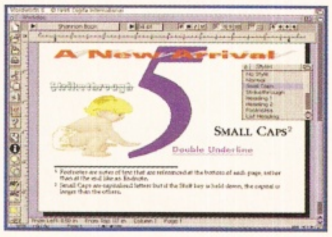
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Words at your fingertips

Hot on the heels of Wordworth 4SE, which comes bundled with the Amiga Magic packs, is the latest version of Digita's powerful word processing program. Wordworth 5 is due for release in January 1996 and incorporates many new features. Not only is the program faster than before, but it also now has drag and drop style sheets, footnotes, intelligent internal printer font support for laserjet printers, background printing and ARexx support – to mention just a few of the





improvements. The upgrade from version 3 or later will cost £29.99, and the upgrade from other versions (including other word processors) costs £39.99.

We will have the full review of Wordworth 5 just as soon as we get our hands on the program! Call Digita on ☎ 01395 270273 for further details.

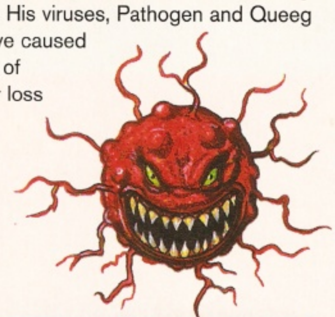
Smart storage

If you find yourself short of storage space, one solution would be to get hold of the new SyQuest EZ-135 removable cartridge drive. This drive aims to be a direct competitor to the Iomega Zip drive – it has an extra 35Mb of capacity for a start. The EZ-135 is available as either IDE or SCSI and we will be reviewing the SCSI version in our February issue. So watch this space!

The SyQuest EZ drive (including SCSI lead and a 135Mb cartridge) costs £199. For further info contact Almathera on ☎ 0181 687 0040.

Pile up!

In last month's Virus Killer feature, we mentioned that Christopher Pile was the first person to be prosecuted under the Computer Misuse Act for creating viruses. Since then he has been sentenced, receiving 18 months in prison for his actions. His viruses, Pathogen and Queeg (names inspired by Red Dwarf), have caused damage that could run into millions of pounds. Microprose estimated their loss at £500,000. He also created a program called Smeg designed to make viruses harder to find and provided a manual. In his defence, his lawyer described Pile as a sad recluse. Bet he's even sadder now that he's inside.



Amiga Shopper's mail order buying guide

To make buying by mail order as easy and as safe as possible, Amiga Shopper has put together the following top 10 tips to buying mail order products:

1 Before you send any money for goods, telephone the supplier to make sure that the item you require is in stock.

Ask questions about the company's policy on delivery and returns of faulty equipment. Make sure there are no hidden costs such as postage and packing. Find out when you can realistically expect to receive your goods.

2 Always read the small print on advertisements.

3 Beware of companies that do not include their address on their advertisements. Avoid companies which do not answer or return your calls.

4 Pay by credit card where you can. If ordering goods of more than £100 in total value, you are legally entitled to claim compensation from some credit companies if the retailer goes bust. Check your credit card company's policy. You can also try to get extra insurance in advance.

5 Always keep records. If you are buying by credit card, keep a note of the time of the order and ask for an order number. When ordering anything over the telephone, always double-check the price.

6 If you're not paying by credit card, pay by cheque. Never send cash, and avoid using postal orders.

7 If you are sending a cheque, keep a note of the cheque number, the date and the exact value. Make sure you know the exact name of the mail order company.

8 When you receive your goods, check them carefully. If anything is missing or faulty, contact the supplier immediately.

9 Always order goods from the most recent issue of Amiga Shopper.

10 If a problem arises, contact the supplier in the first instance. Calmly and politely tell them your problem. Most problems turn out to be minor hitches or misunderstandings that can easily be resolved without taking the matter further. If you think you have a grievance, contact your local Trading Standards Officer. The number is in the phone book.

Titbits

Print perfection?

Budding Amiga artists (or indeed professionals) can now have their artwork printed out on vinyl. Norgria are a new company who have set themselves up with a thermal printer and they can produce work in strips of 290mm high at any length.

You can use coloured or clear vinyl and the finished work is mounted on board or perspex, or you can have it supplied in roll form if you prefer. Call Norgria on ☎ 0121 643 5492, for their prices and further information.

Spinning discs

Professionals or amateurs alike can soon take advantage of a new CD full of fonts from Cloanto. The Kara Collection contains the complete collection of ColorFonts, AnimFonts, Starfields and Plaquegrounds, plus a full set of support tools by Kara Computer Graphics and Cloanto.

The Kara Collection should cost around £49.95 and will be available by the time you read this. For more info call Cloanto on ☎ 0039 432 545 902 (Italy).

Soft-Logik

In our December issue news pages we said that you could get PageStream 3 for $95, or $60 for those on a budget. These prices are actually the *upgrade* costs from an earlier version of the software. The actual price of PageStream 3 is $225.

We would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused. Soft-Logik can be contacted on ☎ 001 314 256 9595.

FutureNet

Don't forget that Amiga Shopper also has a strong presence on the Internet. In fact, all of Future Publishing magazines do. Just point your browser at http://www.futurenet.co.uk. FutureNet is a free-entry passworded Website.

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VISA

SDL and Silica sold

In our news pages last month, we reported that Silica and SDL's parent company Prodis PLC had applied for an Administration Order to sort out their financial problems. We can now report that Prodis PLC have been bought out by Anglo Corporation PLC.

Why are we telling you all this? Well, Silica are the UK's leading Amiga specialist – they have 22 stores around the country and Anglo say they want to increase that number, so that means even more places to buy Amigas!

"Our immediate focus will be to concentrate on taking full advantage of the busy Christmas season", said Stuart Tidy (joint chairman of Anglo), unsurprisingly.

Anglo have promised to honour all Silica's customer warranties and product deposits that were placed with Silica before they bought the company.

AMOS warning

We ran a news story last month about the programming language AMOS being re-released by Ultimate Software early in 1996. We have since talked to Ian McFegan the Financial Director of Europress Software (the original publishers of AMOS) who said, "There is nothing signed as yet with Ultimate Software".

We have also been contacted by the author of the AMOS Dialogue Procedures who says that the rights to it do not belong to Ultimate Software.

We are at present trying to discover what the situation with AMOS is and will bring you more news as soon as it is confirmed.

Image upgrade

Way back in our September 1995 issue we reviewed the image manipulation program ImageFX 2.0 in our paint package Supertest. We gave it a stonking 94 per cent and said it was a "top-rated image processor and graphics tool". Now Nova Design have announced a new upgrade to this excellent program.

The main difference of this new version is that ImageFX 2.1a features extensive support for Newtek's Video Toaster – it supports real-time painting and image processing directly on the Toaster's output display, and rendering to the Toaster.

There are plenty of other new features, including a blue/green screen compositing system called CineMatte, CyberGraphX and support for any SCSI Epson Scanner plus improved printer support and full use of the PNG (the GIF replacement) file format.



Image FX 2.1a will cost $349.95 (approx. £230). Upgrades are available to registered owners of ImageFX2.0 or higher. Call Nova Design (USA) on ☎ 001 804 282 6528.

Meet our sisters

AMIGA POWER

It'll huff and it'll puff and it'll blow your house down. Of course it won't. But January's AMIGA POWER *will* have you frothing at the mouth.

Enticing you like a lean bit of bacon frying in pig's fat, the return of Zeewolf is heralded with a review of Binary Asylum's zeewolfier sequel and a Coverdisk demo too.

As Leading Lap finally reaches the finishing line that are AMIGA POWER's pages, Sensi's new SWOS stretches its lead at the top, Team 17's Worms wriggles into the fray while Hillsea Lido, a seaside management sim, just lies back and enjoys the view.

January's issue of AMIGA POWER has quality written all over it.

On sale: Thursday, 21st December,

An Editor
Amiga Power

AMIGA FORMAT

In the very next issue of Amiga Format we don our scientific research garb and bring you tremendous news and thrilling insights into the world of MPEG, the standard for digital full motion video playback. As well as looking at some new Amiga hardware, we'll also be taking a detailed look at the police force which is using Amigas to keep on top of crime.

Of course, that's not all. We'll also have reviews of MainActor, Linkit, MapleV, and the rather stunning Impact system from AntiGravity. Then there's Zeewolf 2 reviewed and on the Coverdisk, Effigy's Prelude, a complete review of the year and all the things you need to help you and your Amiga make it through the holiday period. Amiga Format January 1996, on sale Thursday, 21st December.

Nick Veitch,
Editor

Titbits

More GrAC

If you are having fun with this month's Coverdisk demo of GrAC 2, you might be interested to know that this month's Amiga Power, January 1996, has the complete game, Lethal Formula, created with GrAC 2 on its Coverdisks. So if you want to take a further look at GrAC's capabilities, check it out. The full version of GrAC 2 is available from F1 Licenceware on ☎ 01392 438802, for £6.99.

No Clarissa 3

The rather excellent Clarissa 3, reviewed in AS56, no longer has a UK distributor. It has been withdrawn from the lists of Burgess Video Group and has yet to find a new UK distributor. Unfortunately, the creators of Clarissa 3 have wanted to charge UK buyers, trying to obtain the program direct, around three times the price that Burgess were selling it for. Should the situation change, we'll keep you informed.

Doh!

In the Christmas issue we printed E.M.Computergraphic's phone number incorrectly. Anyone trying to get hold of their Phase 1 CD should phone ☎ 01255 431389.

Movin' on up

Amiga Shopper readers have helped make Future Publishing the fifth biggest publisher in the UK. Future has achieved this remarkable feat in only 10 years. How do we know that we're fifth? Well, the ranking is based on retail revenue: which means ABC-verified copy sales multiplied by cover prices. In other words, it's how much money you spend each month on our magazines.

Just so you know, the top 10 UK publishers are:

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2. EMAP
3. BBC Mags
4. Bauer
5. Future Publishing
6. The National Magazines Company
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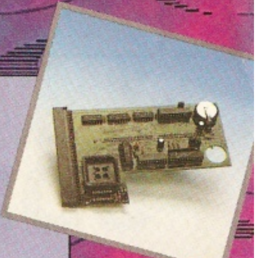
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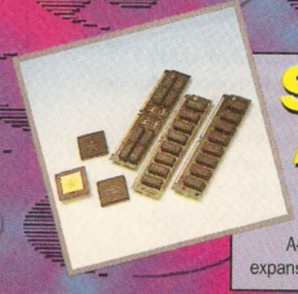
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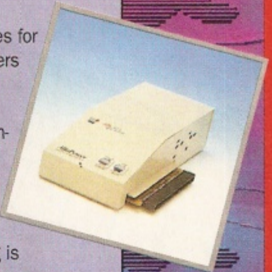


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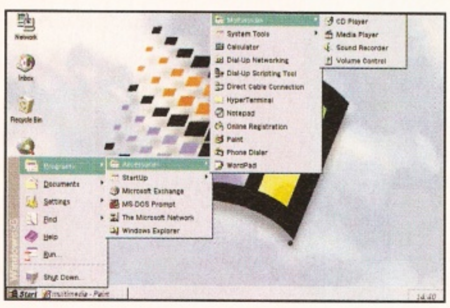
All prices include VAT. Postage and packing will be charged at £3.50 per order (UK), £7.50 Europe and £12.50 rest of the world.

War of the Operating Systems



How does the Amiga measure up against the competition? ***John Kennedy*** *and a host of Amiga experts take an honest look at the current state of the art, and reach some important conclusions.*

> "No other computer can do what the **Amiga** can do in 2Mb of RAM."



The amazing concept of a "Start" button on the PC can fast fill your entire screen with menus.

There is nothing quite so controversial amongst computer users as the choice of Operating System (OS), expect perhaps their choice of hardware. Few computer-related topics can incense so much debate, argument and blatant insults.

One man's OS is the butt of another man's jokes, and yet at the end of the day, what is an OS? It's a collection of software and preferences which make it possible to run certain application programs. With the OS you can get some work done, or play games. It's not a matter of life and death, it's not about race, colour or creed. Yet, listen to the way people talk about their OS, and you would think you are discussing something as personal as sexual preference.

There is no doubt that some of you will disagree violently with what I am about write in the next few pages. Some of you might take it as a personal attack, simply because it goes against your pseudo-religious beliefs about the Amiga. Please, can I ask that before you launch your suicide bombers against the Amiga Shopper office, you must remember that I have been an Amiga fan from the moment I bought my 512K Workbench 1.2, and I currently have an A4000/40 Tower. I have not sold out, or turned traitor. I still use my Amiga daily: and if I use other platforms as well, I am not ashamed to admit it. I tried very hard to make this examination as unbiased as possible, because any blatant favouritism would render it useless.

From talking to a lot of people, I have discovered a great deal of prejudice in terms of Operating System discrimination. Not only from PC owners unwilling to accept that the Amiga is anything other than a games console with a keyboard, but from Amiga users who can't bring themselves to acknowledge that something Bill Gates has done mightn't be a load of crap, or that a computer with an Apple on the case might actually be quite good.

If anything, it's the Amiga owners who seem to have quite a large chip on their shoulders with regards to other platforms, and it is clearly time to wake up and smell the coffee.

Like with like

When comparing the Operating Systems of different platforms, it is very important to remember that the hardware on which the software is running makes a big difference. Running speed trials between an A500 with 512K or memory, and a 90Mhz Pentium with 16Mb is obviously not a fair situation.

Jargon busting

CHRP: Common Hardware Reference Platform
A move towards producing all manner of different machines which share enough in the way of hardware characteristics to all run the same Operating Systems, and therefore application software.

CLI: Command Line Interface
A text-based window where low-level commands are typed. The Amiga has the Shell, Windows has MSDOS and the Apple Mac doesn't.

GUI: Graphical User Interface
Determines what you see and how you use programs. The GUI is composed of buttons, mouse pointers, gadgets, windows, etc.

MagicWB: A Shareware utility which installs new, coloured icons over the existing (rather plain) Amiga icons. The NewIcons utility is similar, but more advanced.

MMU: Memory Management Unit
A piece of hardware, usually built into the processor itself, which can look after the way in which memory is allocated and prevent programs from accessing memory they have not been allocated.

MUI: Magic User Interface
A Shareware product which provides a totally user-definable GUI for Amiga programs. It greatly simplifies programming and adds more features, but at the expense of memory and performance.

PCI
The standard bus to which expansion cards are fitted. PCI is used by all Pentium machines and the latest generation of Apple's PowerPC computers.

Pentium: The processor developed by Intel to replace the 80486. Pentiums will probably be the entry-level PC processor by the time you read this. They are available in speeds of 75MHz and up.

PowerPC: The Motorola processor which rivals the Pentium for power and performance. It was designed to work in a different way from Pentiums, and is especially good at emulation. The latest PowerPC computers can emulate 68040 machines faster than the fastest 68040 ever made.

RTG: ReTargetable Graphics
The idea behind RTG is to develop Operating System software so that it does not know or care where its graphics are being displayed: only that a compatible graphics device is available. This means that plug-in graphics cards will automatically be supported.

RISC: Reduced Instruction Set Computer
RISC is a type of processor which has less instructions than normal, but it has the ability to execute them extremely quickly. With good compilers, RISC programs run faster than their Complex Instruction Set Computers counterparts.

VM: Virtual Memory
If a program uses Virtual Memory it uses hard disk space under the impression it is actually using RAM. This allows many programs to apparently run at once in limited resources. Virtual Memory needs an MMU in order to be implemented invisibly as part of the Operating System.

However, what is important are the features of the Operating System. The OS is there to make the most of the hardware and to make it as easy and reliable as possible to run application software. It's on these features that it is fair to compare Workbench 3 on an unexpanded A1200 with Windows95 on a Pentium.

So what are the choices for the home user? First of all, we have the Amiga and its native Workbench OS. Version 3.0 is the most popular at the moment, and certainly version 1.3 and earlier have been – or should be – assigned to the rubbish bin. Version 3.1 is available as an upgrade for all machines, but it offers little over 3.0 and so I'll take 3.0 as the reference.

On the graphic designer's favourite machine – the Apple Mac or PowerPC – the current version of the OS is System 7.5.1.

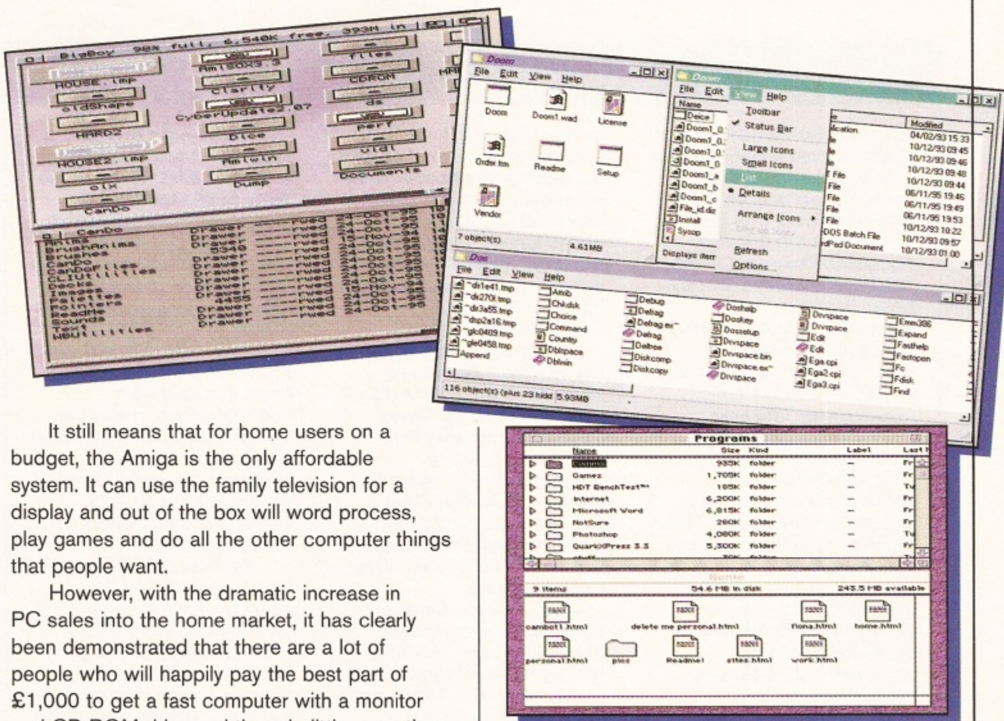
The choice is wider for the home PC user. Unless you have been spending the last few months dead for tax reasons, you'll know that Windows 3.1 and 3.11 have been superseded by Windows95. However, there are other choices and for the hobbyist these include IBM's OS/2 and the free UNIX clone, Linux. I'll be concentrating on Windows95, and make occasional reference to these others.

Interestingly, all the Operating Systems seem to come in at about £100. The upgrade for the Amiga is about £99, and Windows95 and the Plus! pack will cost you about £124 in Currys. OS/2 is about £60, but the best bargain is Linux – it's free.

System requirements

A lot has been said about the Amiga's frugal use of memory and it's true: no other computer can do what the Amiga can do in 2Mb of RAM. You can even run the Amiga and application software using only double-density floppy disk drives: an idea which is totally laughable on other platforms.

The problem is that memory and hard drives are becoming cheaper and cheaper and they do make a staggering difference to performance. There is no real reason to suffer using an Amiga without a hard drive: although admittedly the standard 2.5-inch IDE mechanisms are still expensive and any new entry-level Amigas should allow 3.5-inch drives as standard.



Each platform allows files to be viewed in a number of ways, from a simple icon approach to a detailed list. This is as close to a Shell as the Mac gets...

It still means that for home users on a budget, the Amiga is the only affordable system. It can use the family television for a display and out of the box will word process, play games and do all the other computer things that people want.

However, with the dramatic increase in PC sales into the home market, it has clearly been demonstrated that there are a lot of people who will happily pay the best part of £1,000 to get a fast computer with a monitor and CD-ROM drive and then do little more than play games on it.

It looks to me as though the time of the cheap home computer has passed, and most users are willing to pay for performance.

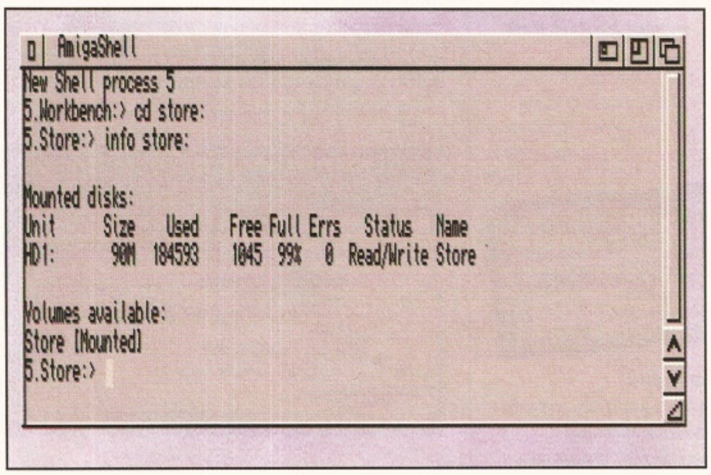
That said, computers are getting more than a little greedy. Windows95 will operate on a 386 DX in 4Mb of memory, but to actually do anything you realistically need 8Mb and a Pentium: in fact, 16Mb is better. Anything less and you might as well stay with the previous version of Windows. The Mac requires 4Mb, but again 8Mb is required for anything but light home use.

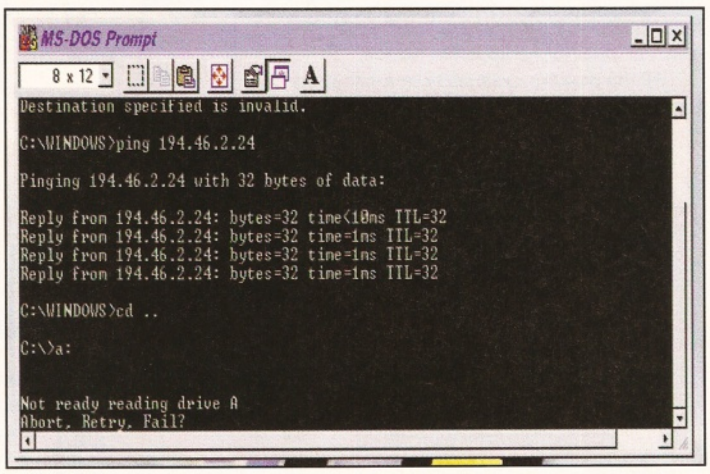
An Amiga A1200 will still work with the standard 2Mb, although adding an extra 4Mb will be enough for most people.

"For home users on a **budget**, the Amiga is the only affordable system."

Look and feel

First impressions are important, and the look of a computer's desktop interface can still encourage or frighten new users. Sadly, for a machine with such graphical promise, the default Amiga Workbench looks rather dull. Although it can be jazzed up with all sorts of





Above and above right: Both the Amiga and PC can open a command line interface on the screen. The Amiga's system works a lot better though, because different tasks can pass data between themselves and even launch new Shells.

The curse of backward compatibility

The PC is hampered in many ways because it still needs to run software written for hardware which is so old as to be primitive. With the gargantuan effort that is Windows95 however, it has been demonstrated that it is possible to keep compatibility and at the same time add advanced new features. How could this be carried over to the Amiga? It certainly won't be easy.

Even comparatively simple extensions are cursed with problems, often stemming back to the very beginning of the Amiga. Take graphics for example. When the Amiga was launched, no-one had ever seen graphics like it before. If you can remember, Andy Warhol demonstrated the possibilities to a gasping crowd. In part, the advanced graphics were due to the Copper co-processor, which could redefine colours and resolutions for every line on the display. The Copper is an essential part of the Amiga hardware as far as most Amiga games are concerned. However, it just isn't possible to build Copper emulation into any Retargetable Graphics standard.

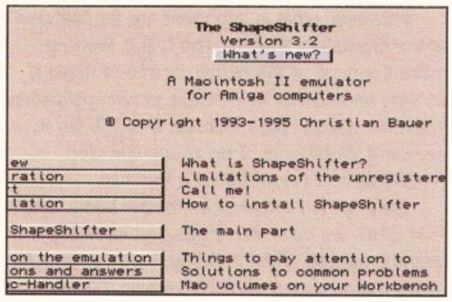
The graphics cards all use standard hardware, which to all intents means PC graphics chips. These chips may offer very fast, very high resolution graphics but they aren't the same as the Amiga. The Amiga can connect to a television and genlock, and this is an integral part of the video hardware.

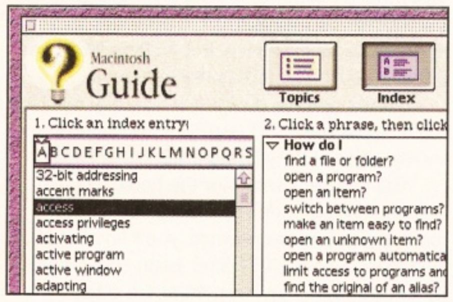
Redefine the hardware and this flexibility is lost. The Amiga loses its ability for games and instead becomes another PC clone. It gains Doom, but loses a great deal more.

The same is true of Virtual Memory, networking and other advanced features. Try to build these into the Amiga's core and you need to redesign the entire thing from scratch. You run the risk of losing the amazing multitasking capabilities and another Amiga ace is lost.

It's problems like these which has pinned the Amiga down. For years, the Operating System was the best available, offering better performance with less hardware. However, the rival platforms have all grown stronger and the Amiga OS needs updating.

But how can you update a system which has its strengths linked to the features that are now starting to look out of date? The answers to these questions will shape what the Amiga will become in the next year or so.





On-line help systems are important, and all Operating Systems now come with them as standard. The Mac's is almost too friendly – it demonstrates how to perform certain actions.

bells and whistles with one trip to a PD library, it doesn't compare well with Windows.

Little things, such as an inability to create icons with transparent backdrops and the poor handling of colour pens on the Workbench display, stop the interface from being as sharp as it could be. Also, the TV-friendly graphics resolutions are too limiting. A screen resolution of 800x600 is a comfortable size, and that means a dedicated monitor.

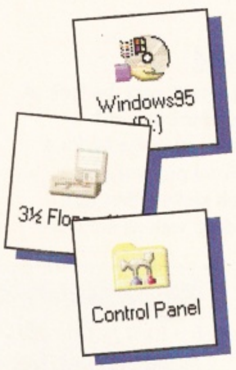
However, the Amiga GUI system remains excellent. No other platform manages to provide as much power over files and directories, and yet remain easy to use. The AmigaDOS Shell is terrific and the pull-down menus and requesters are more than adequate.

On top of all this is the superb multitasking features, which work so amazingly well because of the multiple screen facility. Being able to effortless flip from one display to another is something that cannot be matched.

The Amiga Workbench, Windows program manager and Mac Finder both have their own unique feel to them: it's impossible to say which is better, because many people will prefer one over the other for no apparent reason.

All the desktop systems have a bar at the top of the display for launching programs and performing system duties, and even Windows95 finally includes one too, complete with the famous Start button. Clicking on Start brings up a cascade of menus which can be used to launch applications, and also – bizarrely – shut down the computer. Because both Windows and the Macs depend on Virtual Memory, it is vital that they are only switched off when the system is ready for it. Nothing so glamorous is required on the Amiga, because there is no Virtual Memory support.

> "The AmigaDOS Shell is **terrific**... on top of all this is the superb multitasking features."



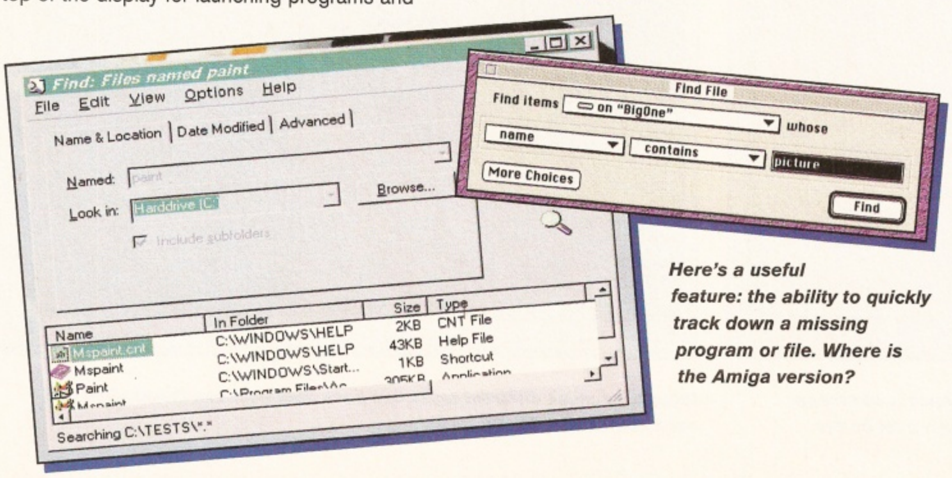
Windows and Mac icons look a lot smarter than Amiga icons, because Amiga icons are all designed to work in four colours by default. They also have a square boundary which cannot be defeated.

Advanced features

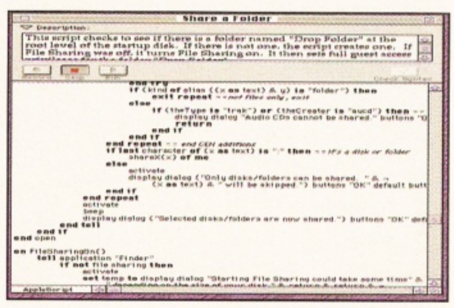
The System 7.5 release from Apple really caught my attention because it included a lot of features which looked extremely familiar to an Amiga user.

AppleGuide for example, provided a standard format for help messages and on-line documentation. It's tied very neatly into a help system for the Finder, and can even take you by the hand through complex operations by circling the buttons you need to click on, and demonstrating the mouse movements you should make. It's very helpful for beginners who can't be bothered with manuals.

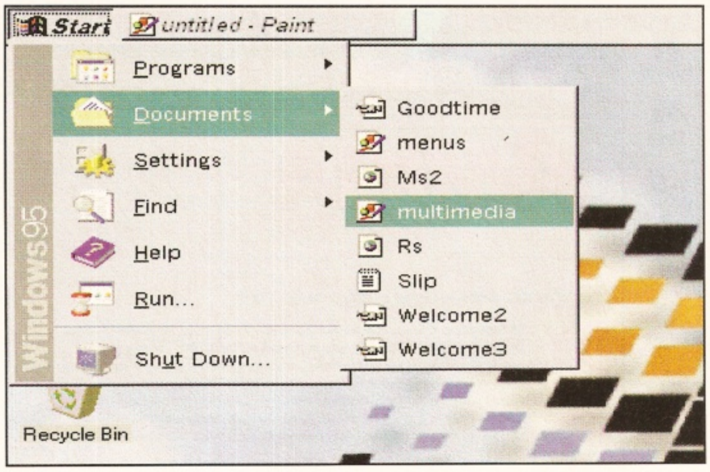
If the AmigaGuide was being expanded, I



Here's a useful feature: the ability to quickly track down a missing program or file. Where is the Amiga version?



AppleScript is a lot like ARexx, but different. It's more a macro capture system than a pure programming language.



The PC and Mac will remember the last application and document you had open. Handy for getting back to work after a game of SpaceCadet pinball.



Video for Windows and Quicktime provide standard ways of playing high-quality video on-screen. Will the Amiga ever have a similar standard system?

would like to see it become HTML compatible. This would mean that it could be used to browse World Wide Web documents, both off-line and on-line.

AppleScript is also familiar. It's similar to ARexx in that it can pass commands between compatible programs using the Apple Open Events Collaboration (AOEC) system, but goes one step better in that it can record mouse and keyboard actions: if you need to repeat something, what you actually do is recorded and converted into text. You can then replay this "macro", or edit it.

Other little points like being able to drop documents into application icons to automatically start them have been possible on the Amiga for ages.

Both System 7.5 and Windows95 can keep track of the last documents used in a separate menu option, which is a quick way of getting back to what you were last doing. This is something which I have yet to even see a PD hack for on the Amiga.

Multimedia support is also strong on these platforms, with Video for Windows and Quicktime standards for animation/small video playback. The Amiga's CDXL was good, but not enough today. The Amiga Datatype system is a move in the right "object orientated" direction and makes programs like Multiview possible, and this should be encouraged as much as possible.

Another thing the Amiga could do with is a built-in utility for finding programs and directories. Both the Mac and PC can do this quickly, but any add-on Amiga utilities are slow.

Plug and play

It's only when you try fitting a card into a PC and come across the IRQ, memory and DMA channel settings that you realise that the Amiga OS's "Autoconfig" system is amazing. In most cases you can fit whatever cards you want into a big box Amiga, and the OS will sort them all out at boot-up time. Everything from new processors to graphics cards to memory boards work first time.

The Mac is pretty intelligent about adding cards too, but the PC has been awful. With Windows95 that's starting to change with the "Plug and play" system, but it will take a while before all hardware is easy to use first time. The "Plug and play" system works by scanning your hardware after power-up, and it takes time. It's not as elegant as the Amiga, which requires that its peripherals have some smarts on-board.

> "The Amiga OS's "Autoconfig" system is **amazing**."

Networking and printing

If you think the reason that the Amiga isn't used more in business and office environments is that the software isn't good enough, you would be wrong. The application software is there alright, but the networking facilities aren't.

In an office there is a strong need to link machines together. Often the computers will be connected to a central machine acting as a File Server: a computer with a large hard disk (or collection of hard disks). Having all the data stored in one central location makes back-ups easier for a start.

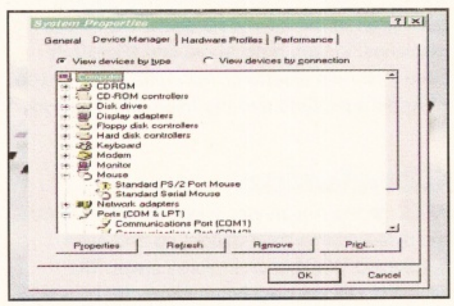
Large projects will have several users involved, and they need to share files and software tools as well as keep in contact by means of local electronic mail systems.

If many people need access to printers it makes sense to have a large, shared printer rather than one on every desktop.

All these features are more part of the Apple and Windows environments. The AppleTalk system is cheap and it works, and for larger networks the PowerTalk and QuickDraw system provides all the capabilities which most businesses would require. Likewise with the PC: there are plenty of networking solutions around such as Novel Netware, but since Windows 3.11 (Window for Workgroups) you can connect two or three PCs together in an afternoon and know you have a reliable network with file and printer sharing.

The hardware for these networks is pretty minimal, with only leads and plug in cards (which cost less than £50) required.

The Amiga on the other hand, has nothing



Keeping track of hardware the Windows way. Well, it has to be done somehow.

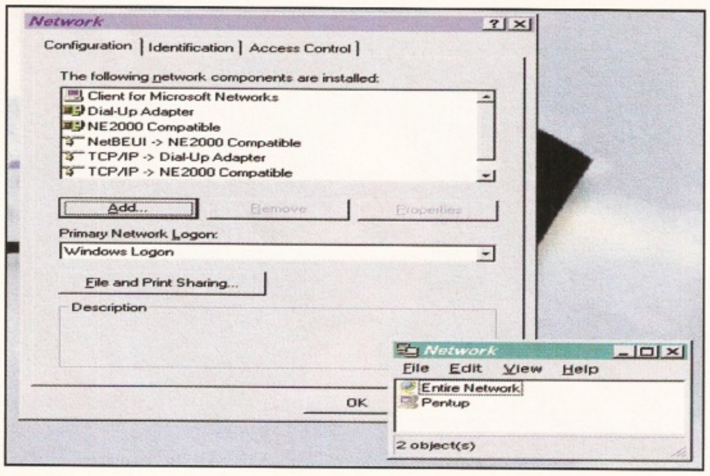
Multitasking the Amiga way

Although all the main platforms claim to be able to multitask, there is a difference in the way they do it. Windows 3.1 and the Mac use a co-operative approach, where each task running takes a slice of processing time and then passes on to the next task.

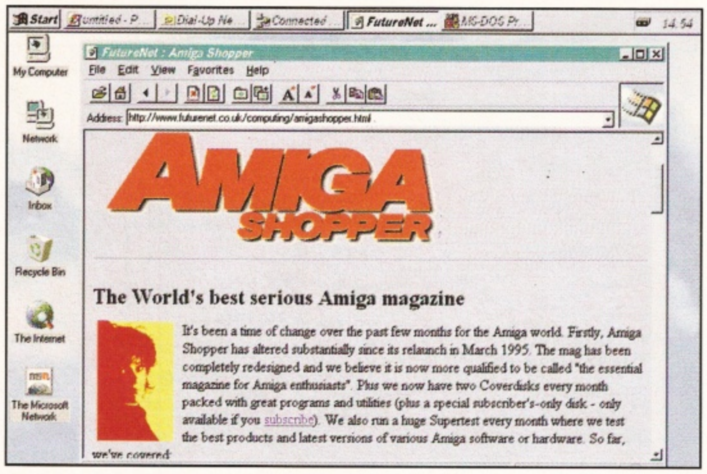
This works fairly well if all the tasks are well behaved, but as soon as one goes wrong the entire computer grinds to halt.

The Amiga however is different. It pre-emptivement multitasks as a built-in "task scheduler" looks after which process gets to run at a given time. This means that, theoretically at least, when one task stops working it doesn't freeze the whole system. UNIX also works like this, and so do OS/2 and Windows NT. Windows95 will only work in this way with so-called "32 bit apps"0: software written to work with these Operating Systems. It does mean though that at last you can format a floppy and carry on with other things.

What makes the Amiga so amazing is that it has been multitasking extremely well from the very beginning, and doing it in a tiny amount of memory. Add the ability to open multiple screens, and you have one of the best environments available today.



Building networking and TCP/IP support into the OS means that linking machines together – and to the Internet – is easy.



Log on to Amiga Shopper's Internet pages by pointing your browser at: http://www.futurenet.co.uk/computing/amigashopper.html

built-in to the Operating System. Instead, networking is a bit of a black art, with crude PD systems like ParNet and only the Envoy package offering any glimpse of what might be possible. And as for connecting Ethernet cards to the A1200... good luck.

Even the Amiga's printer driver support is lagging behind, with many users resorting to buying third-party driver packages to make the most of the printer's features.

These are the reasons why you won't see banks of Amigas in offices, nor will you see publishing houses selling their Power Macs and buying A4000s. These reasons alone are enough to keep the Amiga in bedrooms and small offices, rather than out there in the real world earning their keep.

The ability to cope with the TCP/IP networking standard is also built into both System 7 and Windows95: and that means getting on to the Internet is easier with these machines. In fact, both Apple and MicroSoft have their own electronic networks in the shape of Apple's e-World and the MicroSoft Network.

Conclusion

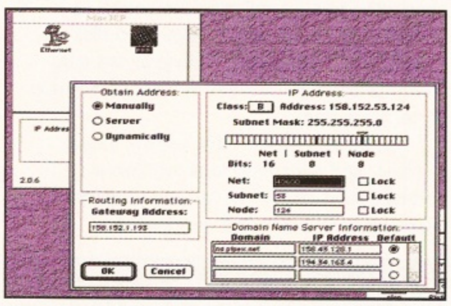
Although the Amiga was years ahead of its time, the rival systems have caught up and even surpassed Workbench in some areas. The Amiga is still the best home computer by a mile, offering performance at an amazing price, but it's time to make some sweeping changes, and that's what this feature is about.

Yes, the Amiga is easy to use, there's no doubt about it. The version 3 OS still has some very powerful features which only now applications are starting to make use of. Yes, it can run in hardly any memory and with no floppy disks. Yes, it combines a powerful CLI with a friendly GUI like no other machine: I've used Macs and PCs extensively and the Amiga is still my favourite.

> "The Amiga is still the **best** home computer by a mile."

However, it is now time for change. Major updates are required to keep the Amiga at the cutting edge. Recent reports have it that the next generation Amiga will be RISC PowerPC-based machines. How the Amiga Operating System is ported to this platform remains to be seen: but it will require a change in the very philosophy behind the Amiga. The next generation machines could be as bland as the latest Pentium clone, or they could be the exciting Next Generation that relaunches the Amiga as the platform that is as far ahead of today's competition as it was 10 years ago.

Keep watching this space.



All of Future Publishing's magazines are linked together using Ethernet and Apple Macs.

Emulation: If you can beat 'em join 'em

The Amiga is unique in that it alone can emulate all the other major platforms, and yet in return cannot itself be emulated.

An Amiga running the ShapeShifter system turns in a very good performance when compared to other genuine Apple Macs. An Amiga with a graphics card and a 68040 (or better) can certainly run faster than most non-PowerPC based systems. Practically all Mac software will work perfectly, and with the hardware-based Emplant emulation system it's also possible to use Apple networking systems.

Emulating a PC is also possible, but because this requires an emulation down to the level of the processor this is very slow. Hardware emulators were available, but are impossible to find now.

Points of view

We asked several prominent industry figures what they thought about the Amiga's Operating System and how they would like it to change (if at all).

Name: Paul Lesurf
Company: Blittersoft
Details: Leading hi-tech Amiga dealer

What does the Amiga OS need?

I think the Amiga Operating System looks a little dated, so perhaps licensing many of the really nice PD enhancements would be a start (such as Magic Workbench). Then there are plenty of utilities that patch the differences so nicely that I can't think of any glaring shortfalls (CyberGraphics, AmiTCP).

I would like to see decent printer drivers. I see no reason why a user has to buy additional software to get decent printer support.

Internet software as standard is another thing that must be addressed. It's getting too popular to ignore now.

What can the Amiga do better?

In a word, multitasking. I have yet to see anything come close to even the humble A500. Windows95 for me is an improvement in looks and features but I still find it clunky and it just does not have that "ease of use" feel about it that you get with an Amiga (or, to a lesser extent, a Mac for that matter).

Also, as you know, the Amiga has the ability to emulate successfully more foreign systems than any other computer I know.

Name: Jolyon Ralph
Company: Almathera
Details: A well-known Amiga developer

What five things does the Amiga OS need?

1. A new object-oriented, efficient, user interface system and application framework. A bit like MUI and MFC in Windows, except done

properly. Efficiency is vital. The Amiga cannot support bloated implementations like MUI, it would have to be a new system designed with performance upmost in mind.
2. OS-supported Virtual Memory (which will require an MMU to be done correctly).
3. Total overhaul of printer support. Printers should be handled in a completely new manner, device-independent graphics will help with this.
4. In-built networking, both local and Internet. Must be able to support real-world protocols such as TCP/IP, Windows NT/Lan Manager.
5. Decent retargetable 24-bit graphics support via the OS. Integration of 'cybergraphics' or a similar system into the OS (this isn't the same as bundling cybergraphics with the OS. Once cybergraphics is written into the OS the functionality would be built into graphics.library and the other OS layers).

All of these, however, miss out the fundamental point which is that the OS must be made portable to other CPU architectures.

What can the Amiga do better?

The Amiga has the most efficient multitasking OS on any platform. This is due to the clever internal design, mostly because of the way that message passing is done. This design also completely rules out task protection/memory protection, which would not be possible under the Amiga OS without significant changes (and would lead to a serious performance loss, which in my opinion, would be unacceptable).

It's also the smallest OS around, but that's just as much due to major glaring omissions from the OS (decent printing, networking) as due to good compact programming.

Name: Ian Wellock
Company: Insignia
Details: Expert in Operating Systems and emulation development

What does the Amiga OS need?

1. Task protection
2. Retargetable Graphics (RTG)
3. Networking support
4. Standard 3D polygon library support
5. Virtual Nemory

Windows95 at least has all of these (or will when it gets RenderWare support), and for a supposedly graphical machine like the Amiga not to have RTG and 3D support is abysmal.

What does the Amiga do better?

Multitasking – it's not often I get to use a machine that really does allow separate tasks to go on in this way, with the single exception of UNIX variants.

Now, that is not a unique feature, but one thing makes it better even than UNIX machines, and that is its screen system. Having a multitasking machine is fine, but if you can't see the output of your several tasks, it's useless.

Name: Richard Baguley
Company: Team 17
Details: ex-Amiga Shopper Editor.

What five things does the Amiga OS need?

1. Port AmigaDOS to the Power PC CPU. RISC is definitely the way to go. Actually, this would probably be best done by bringing out a CHRP machine.
2. Release full documentation on all new and existing machines, including low-level details of the chipset.
3. Support developers properly! Commodore had some excellent support people, but they were usually severely underresourced. Make sure that this doesn't happen!
4. Don't do anything the way that Microsoft do it.
5. Sell a few of the bloody things! Get them into Escom shops immediately.

What does the Amiga do better?

In my experience, multitasking is better on the Amiga than on practically any other type of machine. Macs and PCs can multitask (especially with Windows NT and 95), but you need a hell of a lot of memory to get anywhere...

The Amiga is still unrivalled as a general purpose machine and still dumps on the PC from a great height in a number of specialised areas. However, it has lost a lot of ground over the past couple of years and really needs some serious pushing to get back up there...

Life beyond Windows

You might not believe it, but there are other Operating Systems beyond Windows95.

IBM's OS/2 was designed for the corporate market and provides a true 32 bit pre-emptive multitasking environment. It can even run some Windows applications better than Windows can, and the REXX interprocess language has made more than one ex-Amiga owner feel at home. Like Windows, it too comes complete with Internet software as well as text editors, paint programs and other accessories.

The PC (and Apple and Amiga come to think of it) can also run various UNIX clones. There are commercial systems for hundreds of pounds, but Linux is free.

Linux is a fully multitasking system that can be used with XWindows to provide a very smart working environment.

"The Amiga has the most **efficient** multitasking OS on any platform."



Both MicroSoft and Apple run their own electronic information service: Escom have a small Web site in German.

Name: Paul Nolan
Company: Almathera
Details: Designer/programmer of Photogenics

What does the Amiga OS need?

1. Improve the look and feel. Looks count for a lot these days, and the default Workbench colours and icons suck. The OS should come with a GUI system with as many of MUI's good points and as few of its bad ones as possible.

Having the WB Font preferences program hard coded to the Topaz font is hilarious. I would mention that I'm writing my own GUI system, but you'd probably just cut that bit out. Context-sensitive pop-up menus would be lovely.
2. Make programmers lives easier. GUI creation for example is a big headache using GadTools at the moment, most people end up having to write their own systems. Object-oriented programming is a Good Thing.
3. Printer support. License Studio 2. Same goes for Virtual Memory, license VMM if developing one from scratch would take too long.
4. Price. Make the upgrade cheap! Developers will be reluctant to bother supporting new features if only a minority of people have them due to it being so expensive.
5. Things like organising drawer and file icons nicely, or an undo option after any file operation. After first impressions, it's the little things like this that make a system nice to use. Including, or writing, in-house versions of popular commodities such as Cycle2Menu, ToolsDaemon, or Tools Manager would be a great start. Memory/Task protection would be nice, but probably unrealistic because it would cause problems for existing applications.

Moving on to RISĆ might be a good time to start rewriting the OS from scratch. The only problem is making sure that what you end up with is still an Amiga's OS, and not Windows NT or Unix, or what would be the point?

What can the Amiga do better?

Multitask fluidly? It will run in 2Mb RAM and no hard disk, but this is a double-edged sword. ■

Thanks to...

Nitext Ltd (for sorting out a Pentium at such short notice), and Adam Baker, Scott Myles and all the "points of view" crew.



Get rich!

If you want to set yourself up in business the Amiga has everything you need. **Larry Hickmott** *trawls through the extensive list of Amiga business software and hardware to find the best of the catch.*

Whether you're the chairperson of a large company or a small village charity, it's time you let your Amiga help in the day-to-day running of your business. From word processors to surfing the superhighway, the Amiga has all you need to help you make your business a success. We may not have the killer applications you see on the PC or the Macintosh, but then, even those aren't out of our reach thanks to the many emulators that enable your Amiga to act like one of these foreign computers.

Business software can be placed into a number of categories including word processing/DTP, accounting software and finally databases. As well as these, you'll probably also need some extras like software to handle faxes, the Internet and utilities for backing up all that valuable data.

Putting it into words

One of the first programs you'll need is a word processor. This enables you to write letters and reports and many other business-type documents. You could choose a typewriter for this, but then if you did you would miss out on all the advantages of a word processor. Like the ability to correct mistakes at the press of a few keys, spellcheck the text to make sure all your words are correct, and then have the software create as many letters as you need for mailshots and the like.

A word processor also lets you move around great chunks of information within a document as well as format it so the right words stand out in the right places. You will also make much more of a professional impression if your document is neatly type-written so the information is easily understood by the reader. There's more.

A word processor also lets you correspond with people over the telephone. Instead of typing out a letter, printing it and then letting the Royal Mail decide on when it's going to get to where it's supposed to be going; you can take advantage of today's technology and use a fax modem. One minute the letter will be in your word processor on the screen of your monitor, the next it can be in Sydney, Australia.

There will be times though when even a word processor isn't enough for some of the things you may want to do in the day-to-day running of your business. You might for example want to create a newsletter to send to all of your customers, or even just create some sales brochures to help sell your products. For this, a desktop publishing program is required. These are much more powerful than word processors for document creation. No more having to get a professional to do your stationery. With the right software and your Amiga, you can do it yourself.

Numbers up

However, there is more to business than looking like a business professional. You need the money to back it up and some software to look after that money. No crooked accountants here thank you very much. Forget the supermarket carrier bag full of old receipts. These days, you can do your own books, so when it is time to present the incomings and outgoings to the tax man, you won't be short of an answer or two to explain where it all came from and then went.

There are two basic methods you can go for, one is a spreadsheet and the other is a dedicated accounts package.

Of the two, I think that the spreadsheet is the more powerful, but with this comes a steep learning curve. This is because you need to first configure the program for the various tasks you require it to do. You might have one document file for doing invoices, another one for your accounts and even one acting as a database so it can tell you when you are about to run out of something.

All these different files then need to be made to talk to each other which means you will need to know the software inside out to take advantage of all these different features. This knowledge doesn't just come to you and don't expect the manuals to tell you because invariably they won't. It takes time to learn – a long time generally, which is why many people go for a dedicated accounts package instead of a spreadsheet.

Accounts packages are generally easier to get up and running because they are dedicated to a specific job. The main problem is usually finding an accounts program to suit your business. Some are not much more than home accounts programs while others do so much it's a job to know where to start when setting them up. Documentation I found isn't a strong point for many Amiga programs which is why a lot of us have to suffer in silence while we tame the beasts who have come to serve us.

Putting it all order

Another piece of essential software in the office suite is the database. This is a program that lets you organise data from different parts of your business so that retrieving it is not only quick, but simple too. Like calling up a list of all your customers to pick out someone's address from the mass of names and numbers before you can say, "I don't need a PC to do this".

Before choosing a database though, you need to assess the needs of your business so



"The Amiga has all you need to help you make your **business** a success."

Jargon busting

Emulations: Software or hardware that enables the host computer to act as if it was another type of computer. For example, your Amiga can act like a PC or a Macintosh.

Gigabyte: 1,000 megabytes. With software packages getting bigger, hard drives too are having to be made bigger. One of the biggest is a Gig hard drive.

Form Letter: A letter upon which others are based. A typical example is one which has various 'holes' in it, which are filled with text from a data file thanks to a mail merge function found in most word processors.

Squirrel: A SCSI adaptor made by HiSoft for attaching SCSI devices to the Amiga 1200 and 600, two of the most popular Amigas.

Tables: A series of boxes linked together in a grid for the purpose of presenting data such as price lists.

Flat File: A type of database where the information in a single file does not relate to other files in that database.

Relational: A much more advanced type of database where information in two or more files can be made to relate to each other to create more flexible databases where everything is held within the one file. Useful in businesses where you will have databases for different parts of the business.

PIM: Personal Information Manager. A fancy term used to describe a filofax.

Doing it on a budget

For software that doesn't cost a lot but can still help you take care of business, then how about some from the Public Domain and the Amiga Shopper Coverdisks?

Just two of the many PD packages you should look out for are Check It Out, which is a personal accounts program from the United States that helps you keep track of incomings and outgoings; while Text Engine 5.01 is a very useful text editor-come-word processor.

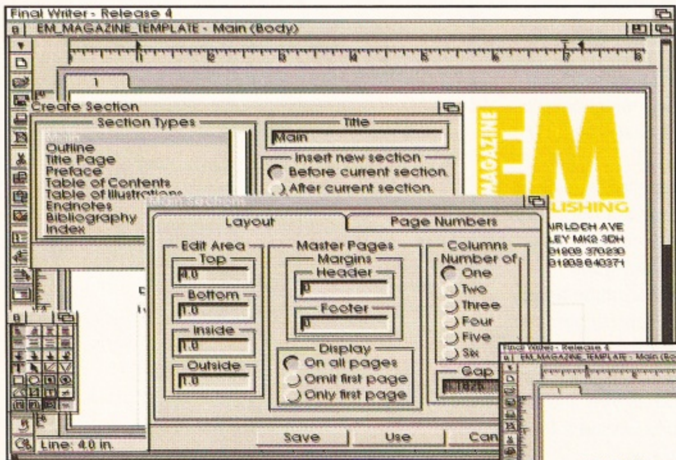
Many fine programs have also found their way on to Amiga Shopper's Coverdisks. Like the excellent spreadsheet, EasyCalc 2, that was on the cover of the October issue. Back in April, another really cracking program called AmigaBase was given away. I used this for ages before getting a commercial package and it is well recommended.

In the following month of May, another program perfect for business use was to be found. It was called Dialling Codes 2.0 and it enabled you to find an area code to match a city (UK).

Moving along to September and there on the Coverdisk you will have found dDBase 6.84, which as you will guess from the name, is a database.

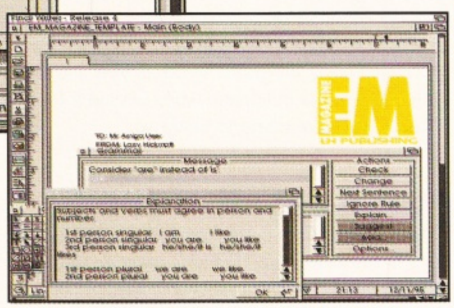
Amiga Shopper has also featured some interesting demos of commercial software reviewed in this Supertest. Like HiSoft's Twist and Digita's Organiser which both found their way on to the July Coverdisks. Even better followed in September when a fully-working version of Protext 4.3 was given away with its dictionaries following a month later.

You will even find a useful piece of business software on the cover of this month's Amiga Shopper in the form of PowerBase 3.4, a powerful database that comes free, thanks to your favourite magazine.



Left: ***One of the most significant features in Final Writer is the ability to create separate chapters within the one document.***

Below: ***Final Writer 4 is the most powerful word processor on the Amiga. It has lots of interesting tools, like a grammar checker, for example.***



you can pick the appropriate tool. A typical question might be, "Can I make do with a simple flat file program or is an all singing and dancing relational one needed?" Before deciding, look at what you need the program for and then ask the simple question, "Can program A handle that?". To help you find out, Amiga Shopper has assembled a number of popular packages for me to dissect and report on, beginning with word processors.

Word processors

Final Writer 4

This is currently the most powerful word processor on the Amiga. It has all the tools you need for looking after your text, such as a spellchecker, thesaurus and even a function that can help you keep an eye on your grammar. Formatting your text so it looks the business is a breeze thanks to Final Writer's Style tags which let you apply multiple attributes to a piece of text in the one operation.

Final Writer is versatile enough to use for creating basic letters as well as producing reports with illustrations, diagrams and so on. It lacks a facility for doing tables and although it has mail merge facilities, they could be beefed up a bit. At the moment, you can get Final Writer to produce as many letters as is needed from a single form letter, but not perform a mail merge so it produces sheets of labels from a database of all your customers.

However, it more than makes up for this with its use of sections within one document. This lets you create several independent chapters within a single document, with each section having different attributes. Endnotes for technical documents can also be added as well as markers which enable you to create an index or contents listing.



Soon to be released is the all singing and dancing Wordworth 5 with new features like ARexx and drag and drop Style tags.

Importantly, the output from Final Writer is also first rate and with the help of ARexx, Final Writer can also be used to interface with other Softwood programs like Final Data and third-party programs like GPFax.

Final Writer 4

Price: £74.95
Supplier: Softwood Europe
Contact: 01773 521606
Verdict: 90% Star buy

Wordworth 3.1R2

Wordworth has been around for years on the Amiga. There are a number of versions about such as 4SE which is bundled with the new Amigas, 3.1SE which is a slightly cut-down version to work on a standard Amiga; then there is 3.1R2 which is currently the most powerful of all the Wordworth versions.

Like Final Writer, Wordworth can handle most of your letter writing needs and to help you make sure all your words are the right ones, it comes with a spellchecker and thesaurus. No grammar checker however, but it makes up for this by having functions for tables and something called Text Effects that enables you to let those creative juices flow when the occasion calls for it.

The navigation tools you find in Final Writer are missing as are Style tags, Endnotes and ARexx, but these are set to be implemented in the new and exciting Wordworth 5, due to be released in January. With this version, there will also be something called Wizards. These will help you create documents by simply asking you a few questions about the elements you require.

Much more useful in my opinion is a feature for background printing which means you'll be able to write one letter, have it printed in the background while you get on with writing another. A number of these functions are already implemented in early versions which I have been able to test run and they seem to work quite well, I have high expectations for the program when it is eventually released.

Wordworth 3.1R2

Price: £79.99
Supplier: Digita International
Contact: 01395 270273
Verdict: 90% Star buy

DTP software

The two best DTP packages on the Amiga at the moment are PageStream 3, which is the most powerful but still under construction, and Professional Page 4.1, which is no longer being developed but is still available.

For more information on PageStream 3, turn to page 38 for a review of how it is progressing as well as a long, hard look at some of the really powerful functions it has. If you prefer something less expensive or maybe you are used to PageSetter and would prefer to work in the same way, you might like to give Professional Page 4.1 a try. It's available from LH Publishing (☎ 01908 370230) for £49.95 and if you ask to

speak to me when you ring up, I'll be happy to extol its virtues and tell you why I use it in the running of my own business. You can also check out a review of it in the December 1995 issue of Amiga Shopper.

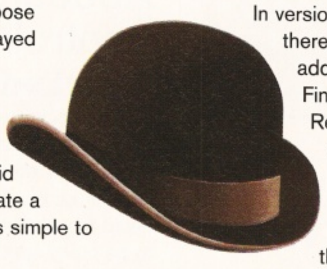
Databases

Final Data 3

Final Data 3 is a listview-style database that is still as easy to use as ever. It is also so powerful that not only does it look more like a spreadsheet, it can perform a few of the functions you would normally associate with that type of program. This makes Final Data 3 useable for creating bank statements and the like along with a database of all your customers.

Version 3 sees a number of new features like the ability to display graphics on the same screen and play sounds as well as animations. It even has a Slide Show menu item. What you see on screen can also be filtered quite a lot thanks to a decent Query function as well as a View filter. so you can choose which columns you want displayed and so on.

It may not have received the most favourable of reviews in the past but there is certainly something to be said for a program that lets you create a database in minutes and that is simple to use and maintain.



Final Data 3

Price: £39.95
Supplier: Softwood Europe
Contact: 01773 521606
Verdict: 86%

Datastore 1

Another program from the Digita International stable, Datastore is a simple to use, flat file database. It is form view only, which basically means you can only view one record on-screen at a time. This allows you to design creative-looking interfaces for each database, which is one of the reasons it has been such a success.

Datastore 1 comes with a number of templates that you can use to base your own database upon or if need be, you can create your own using some of Datastore's really cool design tools. Each of the fields can have its own label as well as be illustrated with a picture or two. Pictures can also be added to each record created.

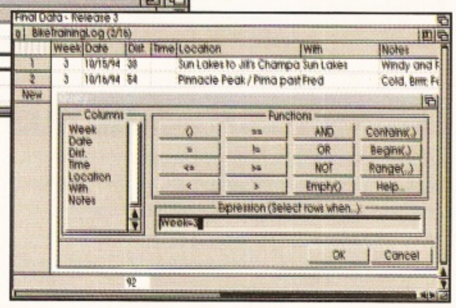
In version 2, which is being released shortly, there are several new features being added including a listview, a modeless Find requester and a 'Print to Screen Records' function. This on top of some of the already useful features like a two-function Query panel so you can choose two operators to filter what you see on-screen and three levels of sorting.

Combine Datastore with the mail merge features found in Wordworth and you have a formidable duo for handling everything from company memos to mail shots.

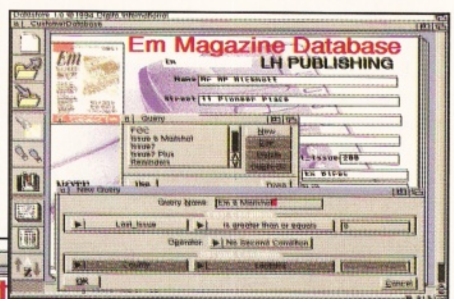
Datastore 1

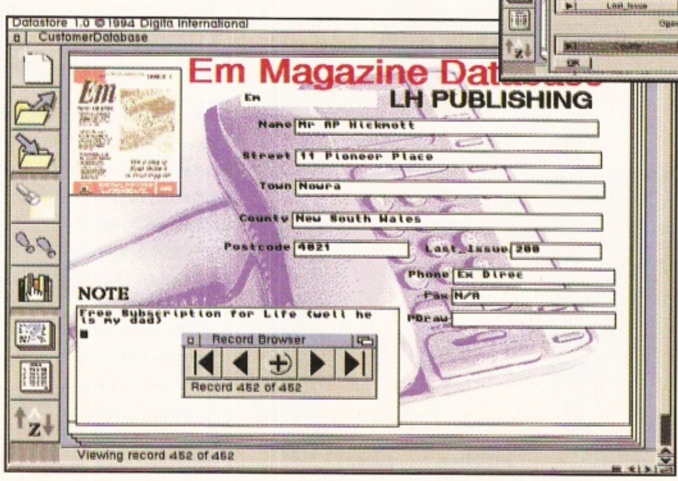
Price: £49.99
Supplier: Digita International
Contact: 01395 270273
Verdict: 88%





Left: ***Just look at Final Data 3 now! As well as that much-unloved spreadsheet appearance there is a function to display graphics like this.***
Below: ***What you see on screen can now be extensively filtered through a Query function as well as a selective View feature, which is new to Final Data 3.***





Above: ***The Query function in Datastore enables you to pick and choose groups of records for display on-screen.***
Left: ***Datastore has to be one of the prettiest and easiest to use database programs there is.***

Twist 2

There are simple databases that can do a good job of keeping track of your customers and there are complex and very powerful databases that can do all that and much more. Twist 2 falls into the latter category. Its strength lies in the way separate databases can be made to relate to each other. It also has very powerful calculation functions enabling you to create files much more powerful than the usual things people expect from a database, such as address books, etc.

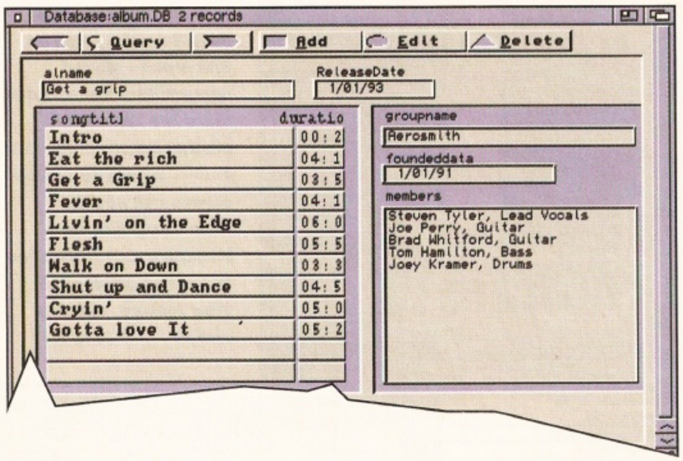
From the time you work through the first tutorial, you are shown how to create business-like databases where the fields in a record can be made relational to other fields. This enables you to have two fields that interact with each other to provide input for another field. Very much like a spreadsheet. VAT for example, is easily configured so it's added or not added to the total price of a group of items, depending on a code of your choosing that is entered.

These powerful features let you control stock, customer records and even your accounts. The manual contains brief, but reasonably good tutorials to get you up to speed, although there is no on-line help which when you consider the size of the manual, for such a powerful program it wouldn't do any harm.

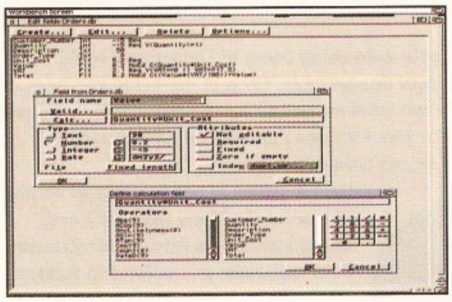
Databases can be viewed in form view where pictures can be mixed with text and figures or in list view for easy access to multiple records. There is even a built in text editor. Twist certainly didn't strike me as being the most intuitive of databases I've ever used on the Amiga, but it certainly is the most powerful one that is currently available.

Twist 2

Price: £99.99
Supplier: HiSoft
Contact: 0500 223660
Verdict: 89%



***Left:** Twist 2 enables you to view your database in form view like this, or listview where multiple records are displayed on-screen at once.*
***Below:** The options in Twist 2 when creating fields are plentiful and powerful, letting you make light work of creating databases that help you keep control of your business.*



InfoNEXUS/DataNEXUS

Coming from Optonica, you would expect these programs to have a multimedia bent about them and you would be right. Both these programs are well suited to people on a tight budget looking for tools to manage their files and keep track of their business.

InfoNEXUS 2 is the file manager and provides a fuss free way of managing the storage of your files. It isn't as powerful as Directory Opus 5 but then it doesn't have to be because it does have one unique ace up its sleeve. It's called an image browser and it enables you to have a directory of images viewed as thumbnails. This one feature alone is worth the price.

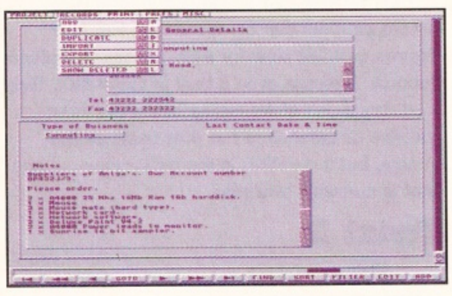
DataNEXUS meanwhile is a simple database with the same type of custom interface as InfoNEXUS, an interface you either love or hate. Considering DataNEXUS is thrown in free with InfoNEXUS, you can't really whinge about it, although it would be helpful if the manual was a little better (like having an index) so you can get more out of the program.

InfoNEXUS/DataNEXUS

Price: £29.99
Supplier: Optonica
Contact: 01455 558282
Verdict: 80%

Organiser 2

Not so much a database as an electronic filofax, Organiser 2 is the type of thing we all need so we don't miss the important things in life, like the open golf day out at Wentworth or the wife's birthday. With an interface just like a real filofax, using a program like this is dead simple. It has to be one of the easiest to use programs on any computer.



I'll let you make your own mind up about the interface for DataNEXUS. Just bear in mind that the program comes free with InfoNEXUS 2.

> "Both these programs are well **suited** to people on a tight budget."

Organiser 2 has various sections for appointments, tasks, address book and supplements. There's no section for making notes yet, but it is possible to use a word processor like Wordworth to save an ASCII file to the Supplements directory and get Organiser to rescan the disk to load this information into Organiser.

The program can be run from Start-Up and either run full screen or hidden from view. The important thing with a program like this is that it's always running so that it can remind you of important appointments before they happen. New in version 2 is a function to create links between items such as linking an address to an appointment. You will also find little scroll arrows that let you scroll through a list of events when space gets tight on the page.

Organiser 2 is well recommended for not only those in business but also to those of you who need a filofax but don't want to be seen with the real thing. And don't forget to ask Digita about the 96PlusPack which contains oodles of new supplements and theme templates for Organiser.

Organiser 2

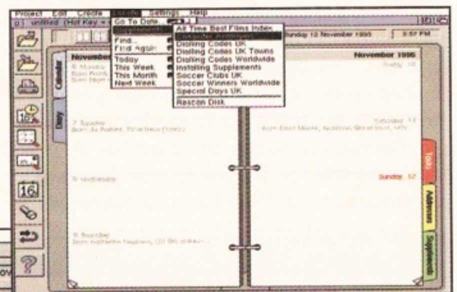
Price: £49.99
Supplier: Digita International
Contact: 01395 270273
Verdict: 92% Star buy

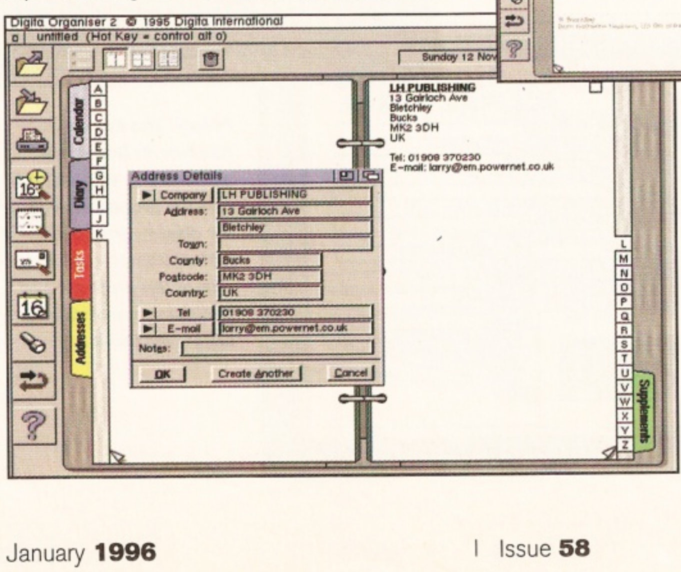
Accounts/stock control/invoicing

EasyLedgers

As we now know, taking care of business requires a number of tools. One for the accounts, another to handle sales and yet another for looking after the stock. If all these could be handled by one program, it would have to be pretty special and a program that fits this bill is EasyLedgers.

EasyLedgers is made up of five separate modules, all sharing a similar-looking interface. This is important for those who want to be up and running quickly because it means you don't have to learn five different programs. The other advantage to EasyLedgers is that because the stock control and sales are handled in the one program, the two can talk to each other so if an item is sold, the stock can be updated to reflect that.





***Above:** Digita's Organiser is one of the most user-friendly programs you will probably ever use. It comes with many interesting supplements and templates to help get you started.*
***Left:** As well as making sure you don't miss any important meetings, Organiser 2 also acts as an address database.*

Once set up, using the program is all relatively easy, or as easy as an accounts program can be. I felt the interface was perhaps a little old-fashioned in appearance, not by Amiga standards which it conforms to quite well, but when judged against similar programs on the PC. The manual is also a little light on substance when you consider how powerful the program is. For the sake of a few quid, the documentation could be improved to include more illustrations for the excellent tutorials and a more detailed reference section. There is no on-line help and as such the learning curve with the program is not as easy as it could be.

With a price drop to £120, this program is just about the right price for the market and deserves to do well – which it already is apparently. I should also mention that it is dongle-protected which will mean that those of you who like to play the odd game between business meetings will need to shut down your Amigas to exchange dongle and joystick. Another case of the minority spoiling it for the majority. However, this dongle does enable Wizard to offer a 28-day money back guarantee. Can't be bad.

EasyLedgers

Price: £119.99

Supplier: Wizard Developments

Contact: 01322 272908

Verdict: 88%

System 3

If ever there's a program that has been tried and tested, it is Digita's System 3. It has been around on the Amiga and other platforms for ages, and although it is starting to show its age with an interface definitely at odds with today's programs, System 3 can still cut it when it comes to looking after the numbers in your business.

There is a but though. When I first ran the two programs that come with System 3, they didn't like me using custom fonts on a hires screen Workbench screen. This meant I had to change my Workbench back to use the dreaded Topaz 8. Once I had that sorted out, I found System 3 a breeze to get up and running thanks to the easy to follow tutorials in the 50-page manual.

However, I did dislike having to remember (or keep a hard copy handy) all the product codes I was using for creating invoices. After having used Quickbooks on the PC, which lets you scroll through a list of product codes, this way of working is a mite annoying and old hat.

All in all though, System 3 is a very useful accounts program providing you can put up with the old-fashioned interface. With a price of only £39.99 for registered Digita users, it's a bargain. Just one more thing Digita. How about some templates!

System 3

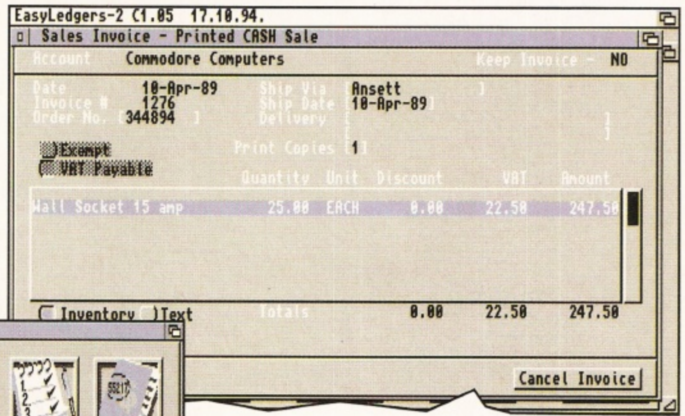
Price: £59.99 (£39.99 registered)

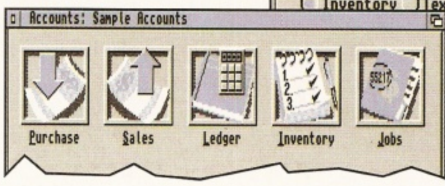
Supplier: Digita International

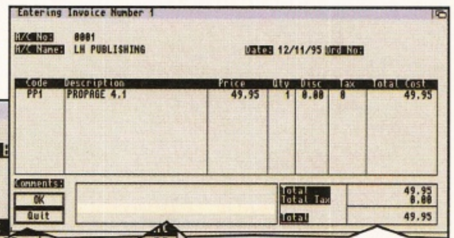
Contact: 01395 270273

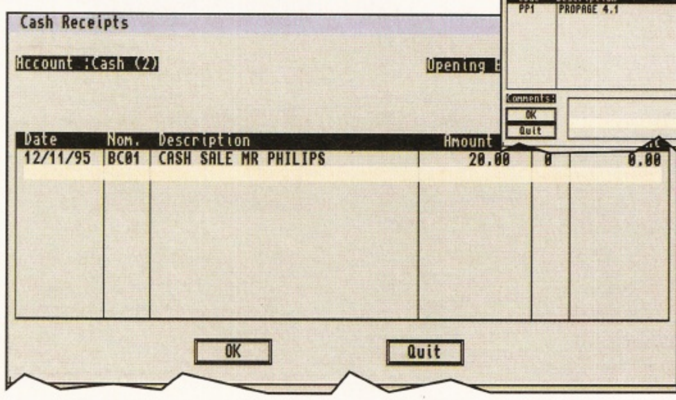
Verdict: 79%

***Right:* Entering cash sales is handled by EasyLedgers' Sales module, where cash sales can be entered and stock adjusted automatically.**
***Below:* EasyLedgers features five modules which let you take care of stock control, sales, the accounts and much more.**









***Above:* System 3 has many useful functions, including one that lets you create invoices.**
***Left:* Cash sales are easily taken care of. The interface is ageing a bit, but the number crunching is still good.**

Cashbook Combo

This is another blast from the past from Digita International. Cashbook Combo is used for recording cash and bank transactions as well as keeping track of VAT. It looks very much like System 3, but with a slightly updated interface. This meant I didn't have to go and change all my system fonts.

With more functions (thank System 3) to take care of the accounts side, Cashbook Combo costs a little more than System 3 although registered Digita users can still get it for less than £60.

Cashbook Combo

Price: £79.99 (£59.99 registered)

Supplier: Digita International

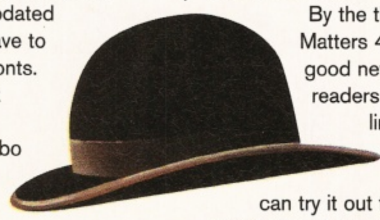
Contact: 01395 270273

Verdict: 75%

Money Matters 3

Money Matters 3 is much more up to date. This program lets you keep track of your business and personal accounts with tools that are both intuitive and user-friendly. It is not an invoicing program and so it won't let you record cash sales and perform invoicing in the way many business-based accounts programs do. But, it does let you set up multiple accounts to run side-by-side. These can be used for keeping track of the money made from sales and so on.

The program comes with a typically good Digita manual as well as on-line help. Combine these with the useful templates, and you'll find setting up different types of accounts a breeze. You will for example see how Type codes can be used for things like VAT as well as for products and expenses.



By the time you read this, Money Matters 4 will be released and the good news for Amiga Shopper readers is that a three-month time-limited version of the program will be on February's Coverdisk. That way, you can try it out for yourself by creating all your accounts and if after the three months you find it useful, the accounts you have created can be loaded into the full version.

Amongst the new features is AmigaGuide on-line help (as opposed to a custom help system), Digisense for ease of use, Financial reminders, Insurance inventory, a calculator with a currency convertor and clipboard support.

Money Matters 3

Price: £49.90 (Money Matters 4)

Supplier: Digita International

Contact: 01395 270273

Verdict: 86%

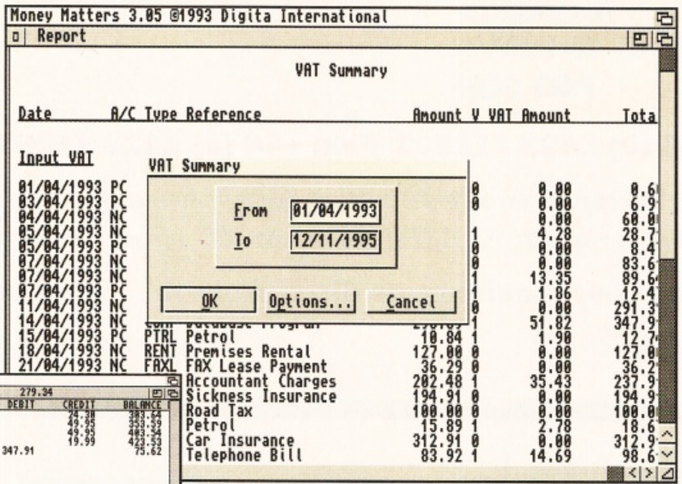
Spreadsheets

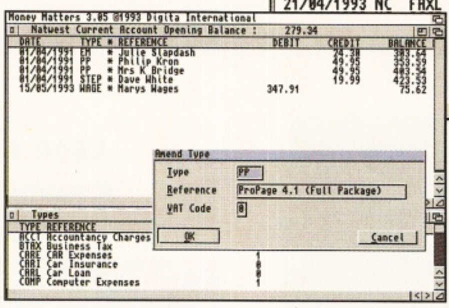
TurboCalc 3.5

Having taken one look at the free TurboCalc manual that came with my Amiga Technologies Amiga 1200, I didn't really want to look at this program. In no way does this manual do it any

▶ 35

Right: ***Money Matters 3 has various reporting functions, including lists to the screen or printer and various graphs.*** ***Below:*** ***Many different types of transactions can be given codes which can then be entered into the accounts. These include products, services, suppliers and VAT.***





justice, because without using the manual, I found TurboCalc has grown into one of the best Amiga spreadsheets. It's not as powerful as Final Calc, but then there's plenty of grunt under its hood. The surprising thing about this is that TurboCalc is still very easy to get going with, making it appealing to novices and experts alike.

TurboCalc has all the usual spreadsheet functions. The interface for example is very configurable and inserting functions into a cell is a breeze. When you want to show off your data in a more visually appealing way, there is always TurboCalc's graph functions to play with.

TurboCalc also imports and exports to Lotus 123, Excel 4 and Gold Disk's Pro Calc. Considering the price of Turbo Calc, free with new Amigas and less than £50 for those who already have an Amiga, there is no doubting the value in this program. You never know, with a better manual, Digita may even be able to make spreadsheets popular again.

TurboCalc 3.5

Price: £49.99

Supplier: Digita International

Contact: 01395 270273

Verdict: 89%

Final Calc

It's been labelled the most powerful spreadsheet on the Amiga and it is. What this spreadsheet can't do isn't worth doing, to coin a popular phrase. Whether you want to create invoices, credit notes or order forms, Final Calc will certainly do the business for you.

Not only that, once you have created the database of your choice and entered the relevant data, graphs like you wouldn't believe can be created and then printed, or if you prefer, saved to disk to use in your multimedia presentations.

The only downside of Final Calc is that the interface is heavy going for spreadsheet novices and so a steep learning curve can be expected. However, for businesses that require heavyweight number-crunching tools, they don't come much more heavyweight than Final Calc. It has all the functions you would expect in a spreadsheet and some that you probably wouldn't expect.

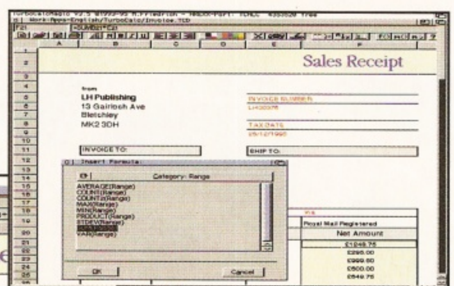
Final Calc

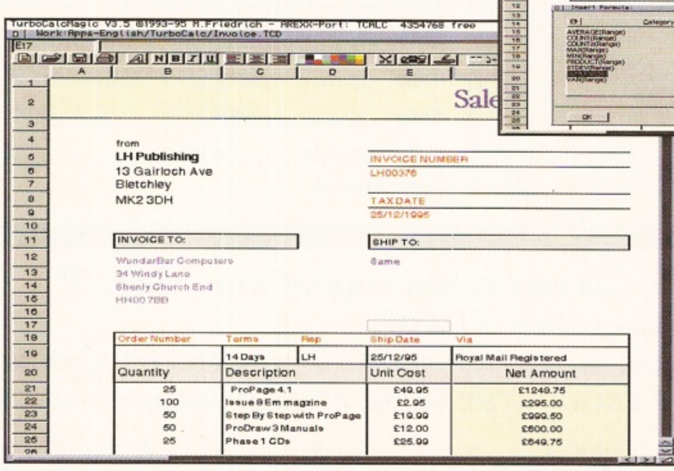
Price: £99.99

Supplier: Softwood Europe

Contact: 01773 521606

Verdict: 89%





Above: ***Inserting the necessary formula into a cell is as easy as it can be in TurboCalc.*** ***Left:*** ***The options for the type of interface you design for your spreadsheet can be many and varied, thanks to TurboCalc's cell formatting tools.***

Comms

Unless you've been sunning yourself in Cyprus along with all those other fugitive tycoons, you will have no doubt heard about the Internet. This is the information superhighway that links the world by phone. Anyone in business these days needs to be connected to the Internet. Whether you have your own home page advertising your wares or just prefer to plug your products in user groups and other areas, being on the Internet can bring you closer to your customers and even find you with new ones.

There are a number of on-line services for you to partake in. CompuServe is one, the Internet is another, CIX is another and so on. Think of each one as a separate city with electronic highways in between. Electronic highways that you can surf up and down using your Amiga armed with some suitable software generally provided by the server you choose.

Within each of the services are different areas (think of them as suburbs) where you can join in group discussions on various subjects.

Taking the Internet as an example, you can surf along to an Aminet site and download from there Public Domain software or demos of commercial programs. You can then browse (window-shop) by looking at various Web pages such as the one extolling the virtues of the Hewlett-Packard printers and scanners. If you tire of that (or run out of money), you can visit or join various user groups where you will be kept up to date with the latest happenings and in touch with users and publishers alike.

At the very least, you can use the E-mail facility which enables people from all over the world to send you electronic mail which can arrive in seconds rather than weeks.

To do all this you need a server or maybe two. Living in Milton Keynes for example, I access CompuServe direct via a London number (serving CompuServe) while all my E-mail and Internet adventures are handled by Powernet (serving the Internet) here in Milton Keynes. What Powernet (☎ 01908 503126) do is to give me (well it costs about £14 a month actually) a gateway to the Internet. They also provided all the software required to surf the networks as well as idiot-proof technical support to use this software.

Independent servers like Powernet can be found all around the country, or you can link up with one of the most popular major servers like Demon.

Another use for your modem is for receiving and sending faxes. Some people prefer dedicated fax machines which can be left on all the time, while others (like me) prefer the faxing to be handled from the computer. You may prefer both, a fax machine for receiving faxes, and a fax modem for sending letters straight from your word processor. A piece of software you can use for this is GPFax.

GPFax

All the way from my home town of Brisbane comes GPFax, written by Greg Perry, the same Aussie responsible for Easy Ledgers reviewed elsewhere in this Supertest. GPFax is dead simple to use but nonetheless a powerful fax

▶ 39

No 57 & 58, Top Floor
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Nr Pateley Bridge
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 5QH

Marpet

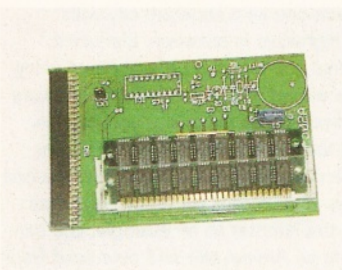
Tel: +44 (0) 1423 712600 Fax: +44 (0) 1423 712601

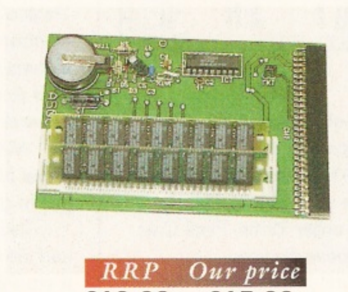
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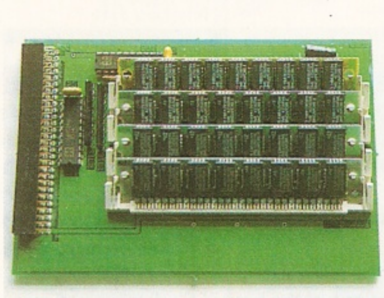
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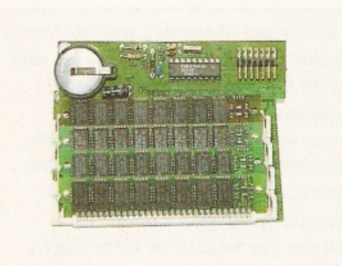


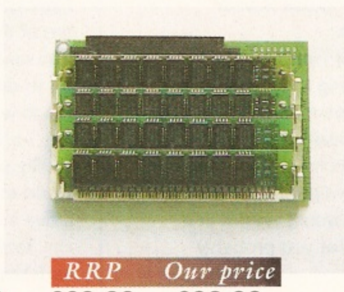
	RRP	Our price
A500 Expansion to 1Mb	£19.99	£15.99
Also available with clock	£24.99	£19.99



A500 Plus Expansion to 2Mb

RRP **£24.99**
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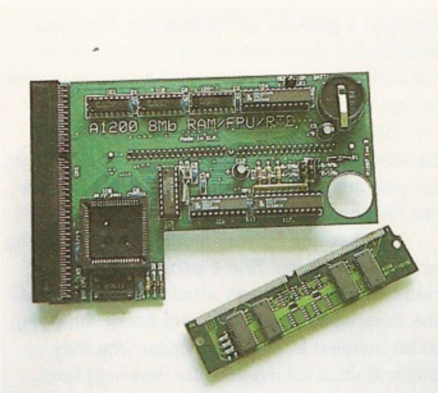
	RRP	Our price
A600 Expansion to 2Mb	£29.99	£23.99
Also available with clock	£39.99	£31.99

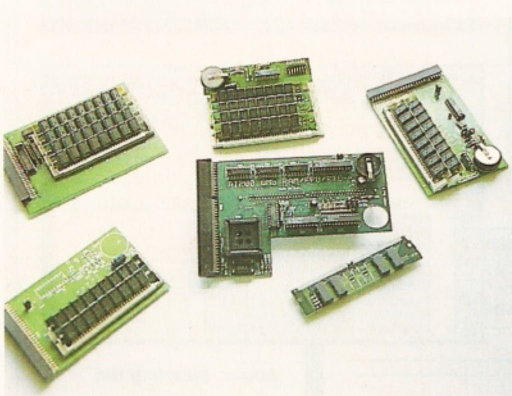




	RRP	Our price
External Drive (All Amigas)	£59.99	£39.99

A1200 Ram Accelerator





Uses 32bit, 72 way Simms
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Optional maths co-processor
Various configurations

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4Mb	£189.99	£157.99
8Mb	£309.99	£257.99
33MHz F.P.U (and crystal)	£49.99	£37.99

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01423 712600/fax 712601

program that can be used to send, receive and print faxes.

The creation of the fax is usually done in a word processor, although because the fax itself is created by printing a document to disk using a special printer driver, you can use your scanner to create fax documents and all sorts. All the normal features you would require like an address book for your fax numbers, a logging facility to keep track of incoming and outgoing calls, as well as ARexx so GPFax can be linked up with other ARexx programs, are present.

GPFax

Price: £44.95
Supplier: Wizard Developments
Contact: 01322 272908
Verdict: 90% Star buy

Hardware

Software is all well and good but you will need more than just a basic Amiga to help you run your business. An Amiga 1200 will do, although you will find a boxed Amiga like the 4000 does have a few advantages such as being able to take a graphics card for an improved display.

The 4000 though is an expensive option, and this may prevent you from affording a back up machine. Just remember that computers do fail from time to time and there is nothing worse than not being able to access your database when you need to. My own business, LH Publishing, makes use of three 1200s as well as some other computers I won't mention in this family magazine. The advantage I found in choosing this route, is that I can take hard drives and so on from any of the Amigas and interchange them with the other Amigas, in case a machine fails.



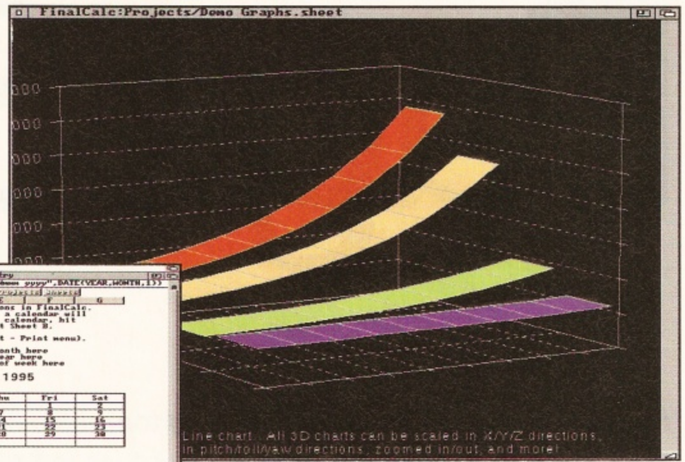
Backing up

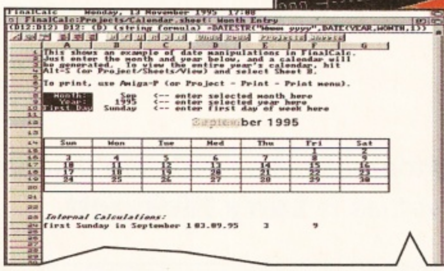
Which leads me to playing safe and making sure all the data on your Amiga is backed up or to put it another way, a copy made of it for safe keeping. Anyone who has tried backing up their hard drive to floppy disk, will know what a proverbial pain in the butt it is.

To avoid this brain damaging experience, you can make use of a number of different types of back up devices. Like a DAT drive for example. This is device which backs up your data to a miniature-looking cassette tape. These devices (DAT drives) aren't cheap, costing as much as £700 and they also require a SCSI connector. The cheapest option is an internal model although external models can be mounted outside your Amiga if you really have to.

Tapes for the drives cost around £10 and hold up to 2Gb (2,000Mb) of data. This means if you have a 500Mb hard drive, it is possible to back it up several times to the one tape without overwriting the last back up. There are several programs you can use to back up your hard drive to a DAT drive, including Amiback and Removable Media Network Tools from Fourth Level Developments (☎ 0117 985 4455).

Right: Final Calc is capable of generating stunning graphs including animated ones.
Below: The honour for the most powerful spreadsheet on the Amiga goes to Final Calc from Softwood.





Panasonic PD system

A more practical device is the Panasonic PD system. I use it for backing up my books and other data to. It is a single tray that can act as a quad-speed CD drive or a 650 optical disk drive. Like the DAT drive, it needs a SCSI connection which shouldn't be a problem with devices like the Squirrel about. Cost is £600.

If the amount of data you have to back up isn't that great, you could try the Zip drive. This is currently taking the world by storm and can be difficult to find. Basically, it's a SCSI removable drive which will enable you to back up around 100Mb of data to a special sort of disk which costs around a tenner. With the drive itself costing less than £200, the value is not in doubt and anyone who needs a value for money back up device should give this a good look.

> "You will need more than just a **basic** Amiga to help you run your business."

Doing impressions

If what you need to use won't run on your Amiga, like Excel the spreadsheet or PageMaker the DTP program, why not consider an emulator? This is hardware or software that enables you to run programs from the PC or Macintosh on your Amiga.

After all, there is no point in giving up your Amiga just to run the odd application is there? For the PC, there are various hardware emulators for boxed Amiga owners as well as software like PC Task 3.

If you prefer to use a Macintosh, then you could turn to something like ShapeShifter which has received very good reviews in recent months.

Also good value these days is a second hard disk. With prices having dropped below £200, another external or internal drive may be a good choice. By making sure all your data files are saved to the same partition, this can be easily backed up by creating a second partition the same size on another hard drive. All that is needed then to back up your files, is to disk copy one partition to another.

Hard copy

You can also back up data to paper by using a printer. Every Amiga owner at some time or another will need a printer and business users more than most. I won't dwell on this because next month Amiga Shopper has a Supertest on printers where I can give you a lot more detail about the choices you can make. I will say however, that if you are choosing a printer for your business, think hard about what you need it for. A laser is like having a photocopier and in conjunction with a scanner can be used as such, as can an inkjet but this type of printer is much slower than the laser. However, an inkjet is useful if you require colour output, while if you use multi-part invoicing, you may need an impact printer (pin printer).

Scanners

Just as you need a way of outputting your work, there will be times when you need a way of getting stuff into your Amiga. Just the other day I needed a copy of an important document and used the scanner to make this copy. Which was just as well because the original went missing in the post and I had to use the back up. Saved by the Amiga again.

The best scanner on the Amiga at the moment is the Epson GT-9000 although it's about to come under stiff competition from its stable-mate, the Epson GT-5000. This will be hundreds of pounds cheaper according to retailers. Flatbeds are the best choice even if they are a bit pricey – make sure you take into account that you'll need something like ImageFX 1.5 and a special parallel cable.

If cash is a bit tight, then consider as a last resort a hand scanner. Power Computing (☎ 01234 273000) do a very good colour hand scanner, while if all you do is scan line art and OCR text, then try the Alfascan Plus from Golden Image (☎ 0181 900 9291). ■

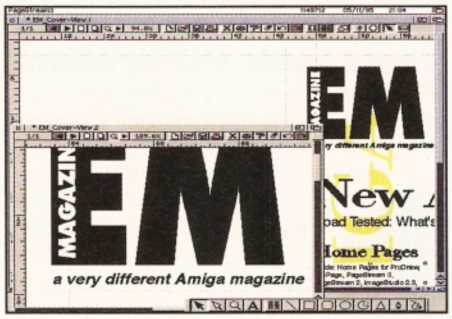
PageStream 3.0h2

PageStream 3 is a heavyweight desktop publishing program that promises to put Amiga DTP on the map. Here to expose the program's virtues is **Larry Hickmott.**

Desktop publishing on the Amiga has for a long time been very strong, but it looked like going sour when Gold Disk pulled out of the market. However, it turned out that Soft-Logik didn't need competition from Gold Disk for it to continue to develop PageStream into a world-beating program.

Instead, this great American developer turned its sights on QuarkXPress and PageMaker, the killer DTP applications on the Macintosh and PC. Soft-Logik has developed PageStream 3 for the Amiga with further versions also being developed for the PC and Macintosh.

Just over a year ago – a year late as it was – PageStream 3 was released unfinished. The howls of protest from user and media alike were heard all the way back to St. Louis, where Soft-Logik are based. Despite telling us the program would be useable, few Amiga owners I talked to thought it was.



The ability to have different views of the one document is very useful.

However, nowadays PageStream 3, despite still not being finished, is a much better program. A fact that has not gone unnoticed by the powers that be at Amiga Shopper, who decided that I should report on its progress.

Not that I haven't stopped looking at it. I have after all just spent many weeks creating a book with PageStream and although I didn't feel as comfortable with the program as I would like, the fact I got the job done without any major hiccups was a good indication of just how far Soft-Logik have progressed with it.

The version for this review is 3.0h2. It was supposed to be 3.0i, but Soft-Logik were obviously having a spot of bother getting this one done and so a second "h" release was put together, so those people buying the new Text Effects module could use it with the program. (Text Effects won't work with release 3.0h.)

Unfinished business

Soft-Logik may have made dramatic progress with this version of PageStream but it still has a number of features that are unfinished. These include Plate Control, Find and Replace, Facing Pages, Greeking Text, Trapping, anchoring a graphic to a piece of text, editing the kerning of a font and quite a few more.

Many of these should be finished in version 3.0i and the rest by 3.1. I've given up predicting when this will happen because the release dates seem to get put back further and further. Give them six months I reckon and we should have a DTP program that will be as near to perfect as we will ever see on the Amiga.

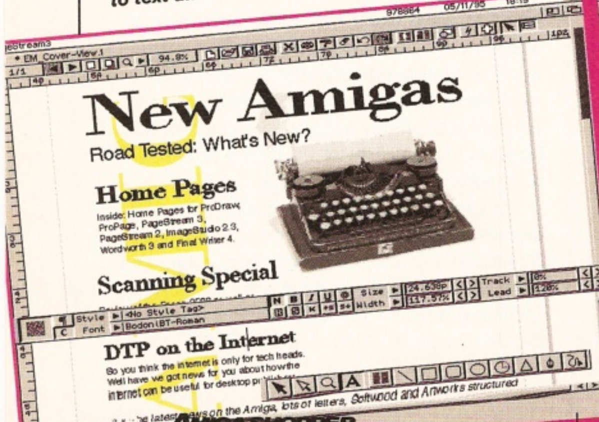
Kicking the Amiga habit

PageStream is a real killer application. In most reviews the real high end features are glossed over because many of you simply won't need them for daily use. But there isn't any point in talking about the basics, because PageStream 3 has them all and a lot more besides.

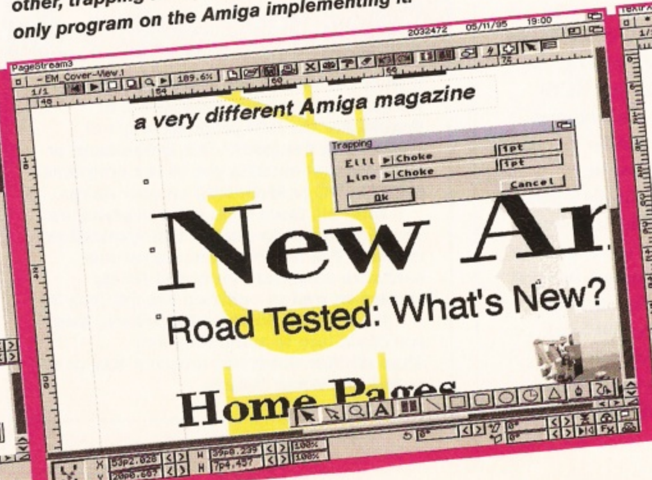
It is the high end features that make PageStream 3 so special. Many of you will know that I not only currently use ProPage 4.1, but I also sell it. The reason I use ProPage 4.1 for nearly all my work is because it's quick, reliable and I know it better than I know my wife. Sad, but true. So you might expect me to slag PageStream off a wee bit. Well, you'd be wrong.

There are times when professional or serious publishers need high end features and nothing was able to provide them – until

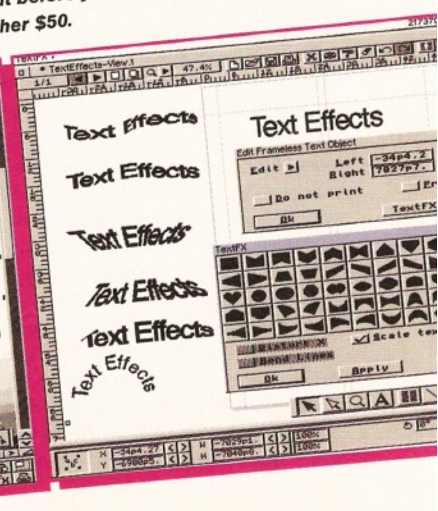
The most significant feature of PageStream 3 is the Edit Palette. It lets you access attributes to text and objects without using a menu.



When you have coloured items overlapping each other, trapping is important. PageStream 3 is the only program on the Amiga implementing it.



A new feature with PageStream 3.0h2 is Text Effects, but before you get excited it will set you back another $50.



PageStream 3 arrived. When my printing firm said, "Can't you trap that logo?", I had to say no because ProPage can't do that – nor can any other current publishing program on the Amiga.

This is just one of a number of features that will be present in the software when it is fully operational. Users, disappointed with how long PageStream 3 is taking to be finished, often ask, "Will it be worth the wait?". The answer is yes.

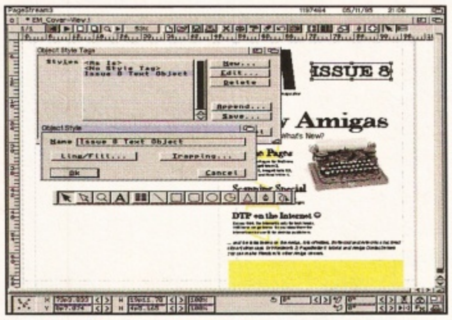
Under the thumb

There are plenty of things in PageStream that no other program on the Amiga has. Like the Edit Palette, for example. This is a floating bar that lets you access many of the functions normally hidden away in menus. I'm sure many of you will have had to go to a menu to change the size of your text or rotate a box. In PageStream 3, the Edit Palette lets you do all this and a lot more very quickly. If I was to give out awards for the best feature to be implemented, it would have to be the Edit Palette.

The rest of the features I want to mention are more specialist. Ones like Insert Character where you can access letters outside the normal keyboard character set. I was able to find some interesting dingbats, for example.

Imagine you need to create a table of figures for a sailing club and want a picture of a boat to be inserted in different places. By using this feature and selecting a font that contains a sailing boat, the character can be inserted at the click of a button. Brilliant and very useful now that I've had the chance to play with it.

While on the subject of text, PageStream 3 continues to let you add fonts on the fly – that is, after running the program. I was able to add fonts at any time from hard disk, floppy disk and CD. Another useful feature for those of us who do manuals and write books is anchoring an



As well as style tags for text, objects can also be tagged with a set of attributes.

object to text. This is something I have used with QuarkXPress and I was very disappointed that it isn't as yet implemented in PageStream 3. It will be though, so I can hold tight until it is.

One feature you don't have to wait for is PageStream 3's ability to convert a drawing into a text frame. Recently, I made use of some screenshots of text in the shape of a phone in ProPage. This was done using text runaround and a couple of clips from ProDraw. With PageStream 3 it's even simpler.

Picture this

Anyone looking at PageStream 3 and thinking that its text handling is good should take a look at the way it handles graphics. Not only does PageStream 3 come with a superb bitmap editor called BME, it also supports more graphics than you can poke a stick at. Not everything is catered for, and some (like the JPEG filter) will cost a few extra quid, but put them all together and there is very little PageStream won't handle. I expect that this will get even better as the PC and Macintosh versions are created.

For me though, one of the really necessary features is trapping. Imagine a red circle on top of a green one. When printed using most Amiga programs, where the red one sits on top of the green one, the paper will be left white so the red ink isn't printed on top of the green. (This is called Knockout.) However, if the printer doesn't quite print the red circle in the right place, a white line is created between the end of the red circle and the beginning of the green bit.

To avoid problems like this occurring, you can use what is known as trapping, where one colour will be printed slightly bigger and another slightly smaller, so there is a small amount of overlap. This way, no tell-tale white lines appear. This will be one of the most useful functions in the program when I do colour work. When the function is finished that is.

Of more importance to most users are the drawing tools that are being added to PageStream. A number of these tools are still to be finished, but if you take into account that in a program like PageMaker 5 on the PC you can't even draw a triangle, PageStream 3 starts to look pretty good, even without its missing tools.

Itchy and scratchy

The functions discussed so far have only just scratched the surface. I haven't discussed the Pantone colours, the bitmap and gradient fills, the fencing and text runaround functions, etc. There is so much to PageStream 3 and yet, still so much to be finished and even more to be added when they finally get it fully functioning.

Soft-Logik, after all, are having to play catch-up in some areas. Some of the new features in PageMaker 6 look pretty yummy and I hope Soft-Logik will take note of them. With versions of PageStream 3 being created for the PC and Macintosh, I am sure they have. Amiga users should benefit from that as well.

Unlike the original version 3, this one is very usable. Many Amiga owners are doing magazines, books and more with it. If I sound enthusiastic about it, I am. However, I won't be giving up ProPage for it, because as much as I like PageStream 3, I can't see it completely replacing a program that copes pretty well already with what I do. PageStream 3 after all, is a big program and because of that it can be like driving a Roller around the streets of London. I can always get a faster Amiga! ■

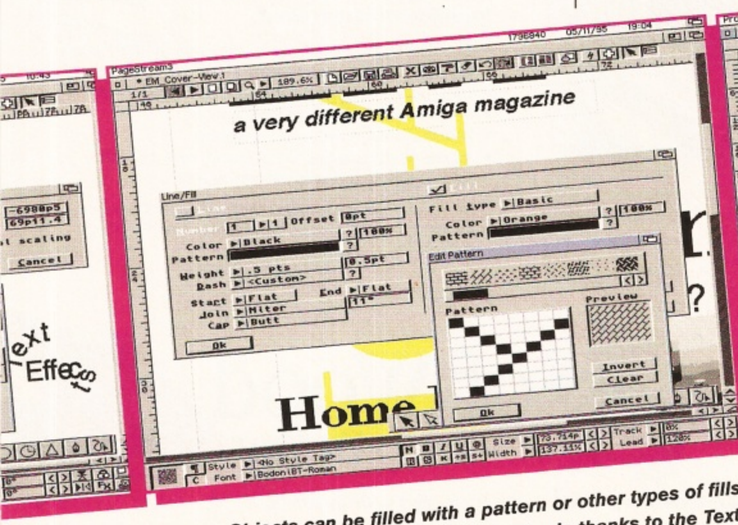
PageStream 3.0h2

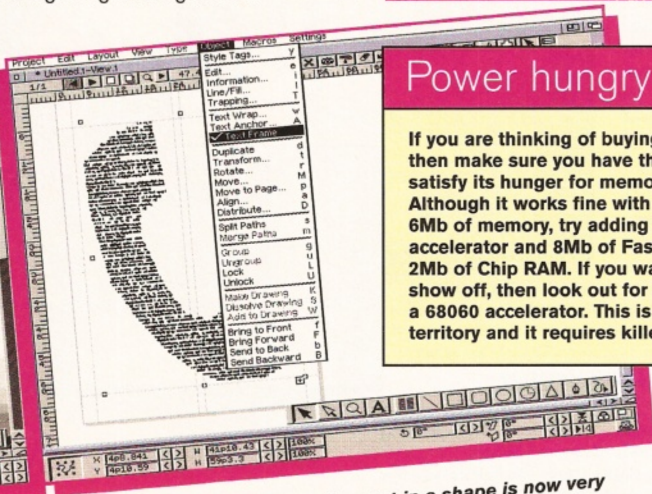
Price:	£134.95
Supplier:	Soft Logik
Contact:	001 314 256 9595

Verdict: 87%

Upgrades

If you require PageStream upgrades, these are available free from Compuserve or from Soft-Logik's own BBS. You can also contact LH Publishing, we have them all up to 3.0h2 and provide these at a nominal charge to cover costs. Call ☎ 01908 370230.



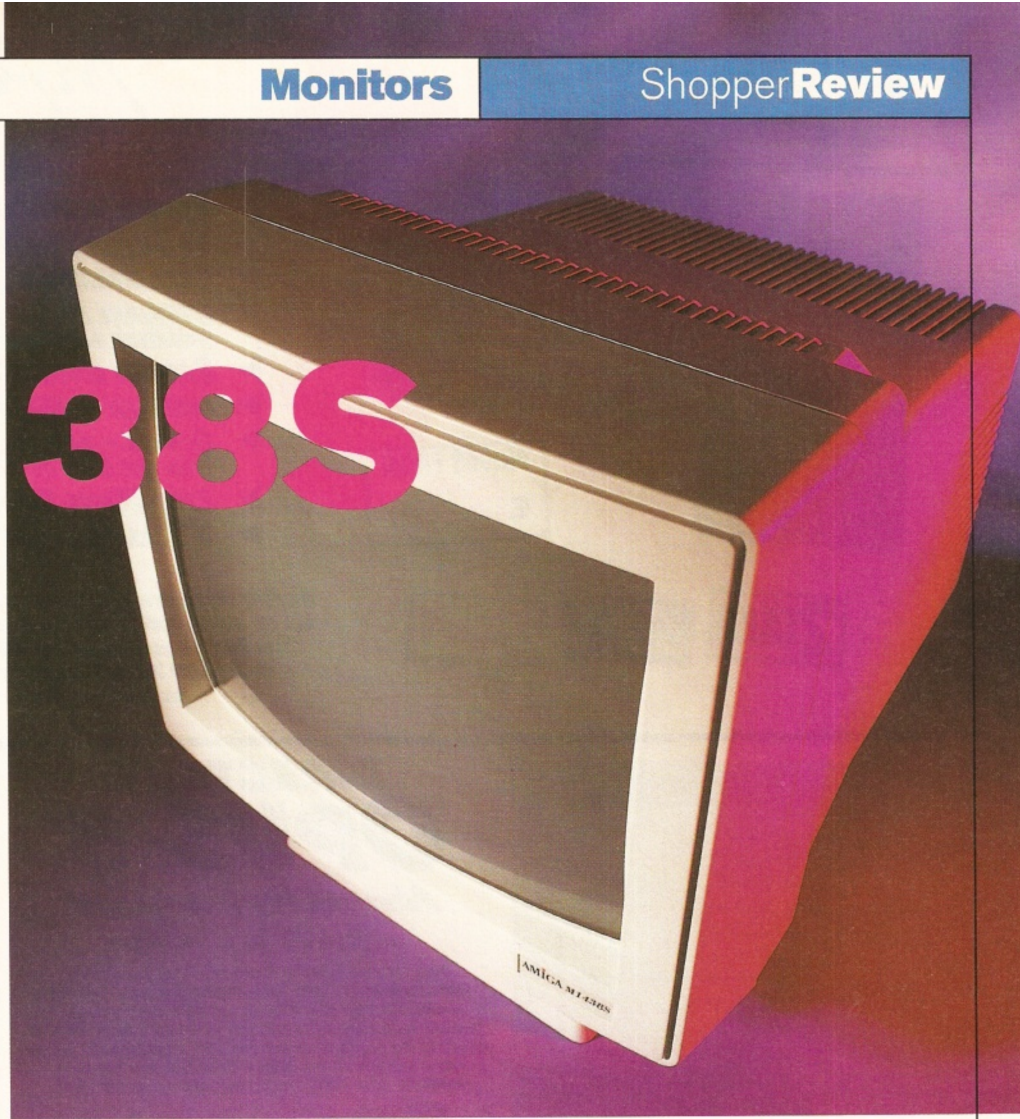


Power hungry

If you are thinking of buying PageStream 3, then make sure you have the hardware to satisfy its hunger for memory and speed. Although it works fine with an A1200 and 6Mb of memory, try adding at least a 68030 accelerator and 8Mb of Fast RAM to the 2Mb of Chip RAM. If you want to really show off, then look out for a 68040 or even a 68060 accelerator. This is killer application territory and it requires killer hardware.

Above: Objects can be filled with a pattern or other types of fills like a gradient. Above right: Putting text in a shape is now very simple thanks to the Text Frame function that can convert a simple drawing into a text frame.

AMIGA M1438S



*We've had loads of letters asking us what the new AT monitors are like. So we asked **Nick Veitch** to take a look at one...*

In the first 10 years of the Amiga, Commodore proved themselves to be not quite excellent when it came to the manufacture of peripherals for their most famous computer. There were hard drives that were too slow, external floppy drives that were three times the size of anyone else's, printers that were barely adequate for anything more than draft copies, and so on.

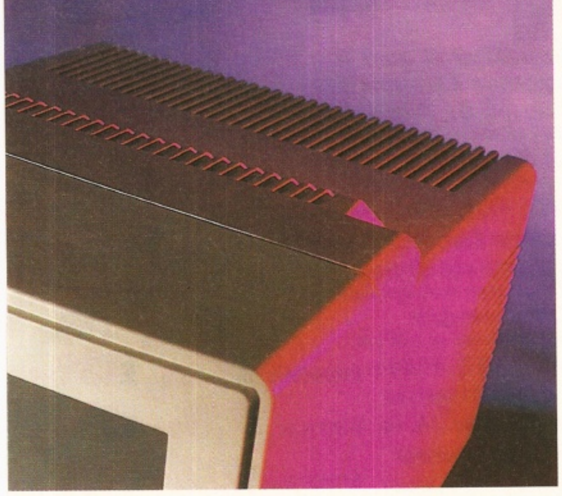
The only consistently good peripherals were the monitors (which could have been because they were mostly produced by other manufacturers such as Philips), from the 1084S onwards. I bought a 1084 when they first came out. It has served me faithfully all these years, and the great thing is, it has a composite input too.

Even later Commodore branded monitors, like the 1960 and the 1940s, which were both good. There were some problems with users complaining of letterbox screens with thick black borders. To be honest, I never really saw the point. Most displays have a black border around them, usually because the curvature right at the edge of the screen badly distorts the picture.

Letterboxing is not a problem you will have with the new Amiga Technologies M1438S monitor. The image fits very snugly in the display area. A little too snugly on occasion. The actual phosphor region on the screen is radiused at the corners, which means your image does sit flush with the edges of the display.

You can adjust the centering and vertical size of the display, but not vertical centering or horizontal size. You shouldn't have to in normal use, but beware if these functions are important to you.

> "This is a good monitor. The **picture** quality is generally good."



Vertical hold

The display suffers when operating in low resolution modes. Black, unused space is clearly visible between consecutive lines of display. Whilst on a monitor such as the 1960, or even the 1940, you could adjust the vertical size of the image to squash it together, this monitor will not allow you to squash the image enough to make a difference.

Unfortunately, this monitor conforms to new EEC directives on emissions which means that no matter how much you fiddle with the brightness and contrast, it never looks really bright. Still, I suppose there's nothing that can be done about that – a really bright screen, or mutant children and chronic skin complaints, take your pick. The colours don't look quite as vibrant as either the 1084 or the 1942 though.

Obviously, it is a pre-requisite to have some form of stereo sound output these days. The twin rearwards mounted speakers provide a few watts of sound, enough for game music and sound effects. If you are really into generating your own sound though, run it through your hi-fi, because these speakers (much the same as any in-monitor speakers to be fair) distort terribly at higher volumes.

Get connected

The monitor connects to the back of your Amiga via the 23-pin connector. There is no need for an adaptor, which is both a good and a bad thing. Obviously it is more convenient not to have some great silver box sticking out of the back of your Amiga. But at least such adaptors exist – try getting ones that go the other way around. This means you will be unable to use this monitor with display cards such as the Retina, Picasso etc, or with any flicker fixers, even though with a horizontal scan rate of 15-40KHz and 45-100Hz vertical, it could easily display these screens.

It may seem like I am being a bit harsh. I'm not really. This is a good monitor. The picture quality is generally good. The connections are fine if a little limiting (I'm sure someone could make you a suitable lead if you really needed one). The unit itself is reasonably compact, sturdy, has a nice base, clear if slightly washed-out picture, and represents very reasonable value for money. ■

Amiga M1438S

Price:	£299 (RRP)
Supplier:	Silica
Contact:	0181 309 1111

Verdict: 75%

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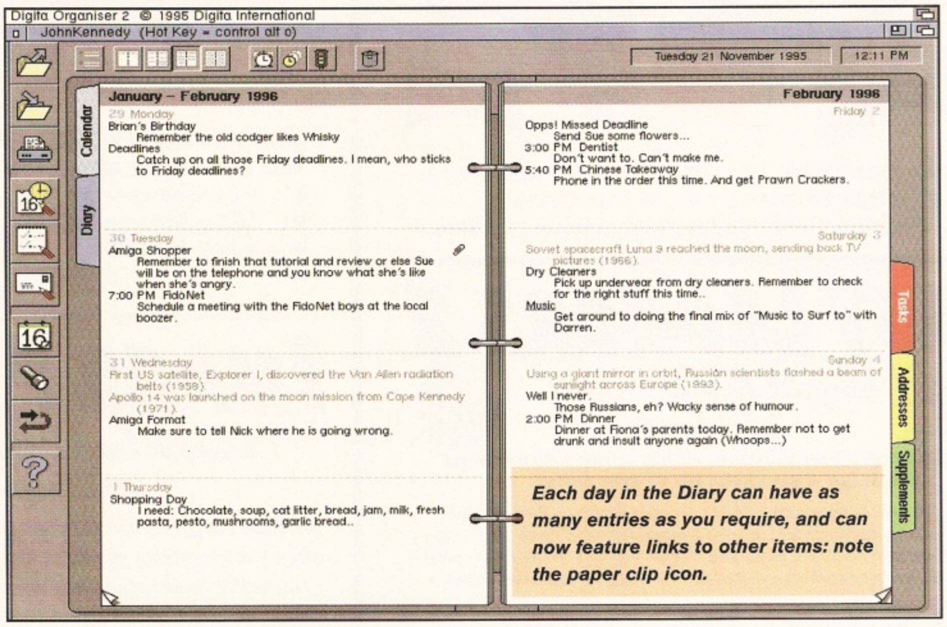
CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO WIZARD DEVELOPMENTS.

Organiser 2

Are you looking for a way of regaining some control over your life? ***John Kennedy*** *may have the answer.*

Recently, I've noticed a definite shift as software releases become a lot more "people orientated". Computers it seems, are at last making moves away from the hobbyist, games and business market into the home. "Lifestyle software" is where it's at, and as a result you can can expect to see more and more products like Digita's Organiser.

Organiser 2 is a PIM – a Personal Information Manager. Basically, apart from the cooking and cleaning, it replaces your mother by telling you how you should be running your life. As you can see from the screenshots, Organiser is an electronic personal filing system and the simplest way to represent this is graphically: like a real, hold-in-your-hand organiser.



Each day in the Diary can have as many entries as you require, and can now feature links to other items: note the paper clip icon.

Organise your life

You can enter information into the Diary part by clicking on the day's blank space. You can then set alarms to remind you to buy birthday presents or something more unlikely, such as finishing that review for Amiga Shopper on time. Other sections, which are all reached by clicking on the coloured tabs at the sides, include an Address Book, Calender and Task list. There is even a Supplements section which can be loaded with interesting snippets of information. Many example Supplements are provided for you: varying from the useful list of telephone codes to rather twee Household Hints which I will certainly be re-writing in Viz style as soon as I finish this review.

The original version of Organiser was reviewed back in the halcyon days of AS55, where it scored 90 per cent simply because it was a great piece of software. Version 2 is not staggeringly different from version 1. There have been a few minor improvements made to the display, and some settings and options are easier to reach. The Name and Address field has been enlarged, and some general speed improvements have been made.

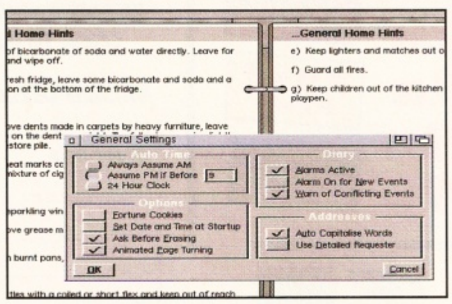
The more important addition is the ability to create links between items: for example, between an entry in the Diary section and a Name in the Address book. Click on the little paperclip icon and you can whizz to the related item.

It's plain to see that time and effort have been lavished on Organiser. It may appear a simple program – and let's fact it, it is – but everything has been polished and tweaked and fine-tuned until it's hard to find a single fault. (If pushed, I would suggest that it's a pity that you cannot enter text into the pages directly, but must use a requester instead. I'd also cough "ARexx?" under my breath).

Easy peasy

From the moment you load Organiser you won't have any problems trying to understand how to use it. All the options you need are at hand, and the large, colourful display is clear and easy to use. Amiga beginners won't get stuck because there's an extensive on-line help facility. Amiga experts too won't find the program limiting, and will still be able to find something to play with.

It's the experts who will appreciate the facilities which the beginners will take for granted: the DigiSense user interface will make guesses at what time or day you mean, and can happily cope with input such as "tomorrow" or "yesterday". Type in a name or postcode and the necessary letters will be converted to capitals automagically.



The Supplements section gives a few moments of light relief, but the setting requester is more useful. Notice how the requester makes use of fonts and hotkeys. An example to us all.

If you are a fan of "On this day in history..." you'll be delighted to know that your Diary can keep you informed of historical anniversaries, celebrity birthdays, religious holy days and important astronomical dates. You can choose as many of these themes as you want: or none at all if you are more keen on making history than trying to relive it. The 96PlusPack of date and supplements can be bought separately for version 1 diehards.

Although Organiser is likely to cost more than a real, leather-bound book it has several advantages. For a start, you are unlikely to leave it on a bus, and the alarm system means that you can't forget something important – assuming you happen to use your Amiga every day, like I do. In fact, I have to go as far as saying that for the first time in a few months I have found an essential addition to my Workbench. You will benefit most if you have a hard drive on your system, and more than 2Mb of RAM – Organiser then loads into the background at boot time and is ready to pop to the front when you need it.

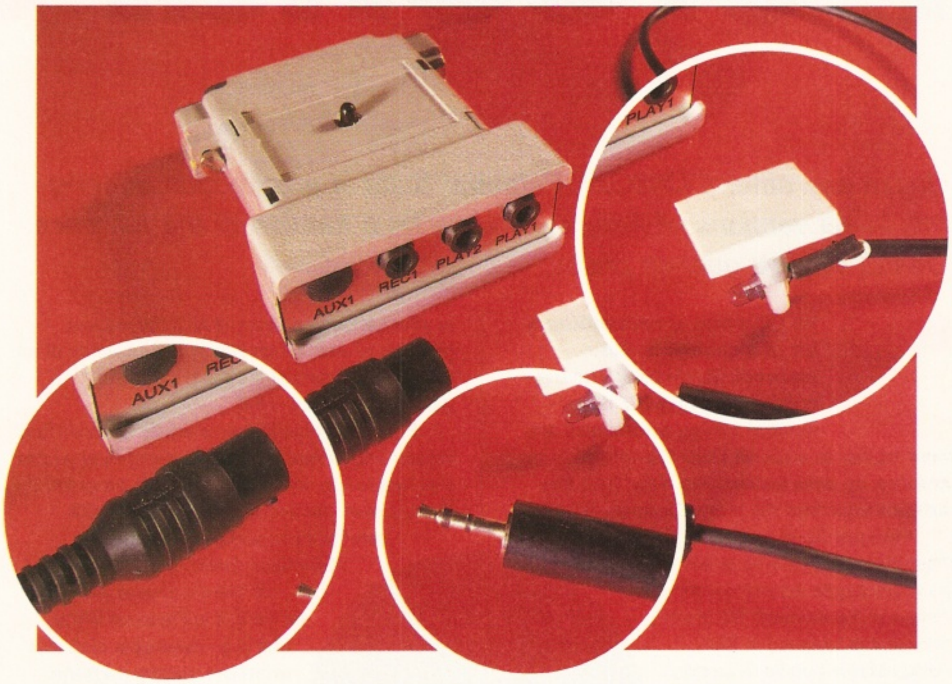
When you think about it, as the best home computer around, the Amiga is ideally suited for running personal software like this, and it's great to see a quality product. Let's hope there will be many more equally sophisticated – but more advanced – programs coming from Digita. ■

Organiser 2

Price:	£49.95
	Upgrade £14.99
	Digita customers save £10
Supplier:	Digita International
Contact:	01395 270273

Verdict: 91% — Star buy

Edit Plug



It may not look like much, but **Scott Claymore** *is very impressed with KRP Video's new Edit Plug.*

There's no doubt that properly edited video footage can make the difference between enthralling an audience and boring it to tears. At its simplest, video editing consists of copying selected clips from one video tape (the source) to another video tape (the recorder). In this way, a sequence of video clips are assembled together and form a whole video presentation. Surprisingly enough, this form of editing is known as 'assemble editing'.

Assemble editing can be a real chore. It requires the selection of a video clip from raw footage, the cueing up of a source video player and a video recorder. If you are working manually, this is time consuming and can be discouraging. Moreover, it is a linear process. This means that even if one of the clips in a sequence is wrong, the whole process has to be gone through again from that point onward. A daunting prospect indeed.

Plug in and go

Step up KRP's Edit Plug to the rescue. If first impressions counted, the Edit Plug wouldn't get very far. It is a small, grey piece of plastic which looks like a parallel port diagnostic tool.

But only a fool is taken in by looks alone. The first hint at the real power of the Edit Plug lies in its simple aluminium fascia. There are four sockets; two for controlling a video source player, one for a recorder, and a filled in one for General Purpose Interface (GPI) triggering of a compatible piece of video equipment – usually a video mixer such as the Videonics MX1.

At its simplest, the Edit Plug enables the aspirational editor to assemble edit a video sequence using the minimum of equipment. That is, a source and a recorder.

At its most powerful, it allows A/B roll editing with transitions between scenes such as dissolves, frame accuracy using Rewritable Consumer Time Code (RCTC); insert editing of new footage over old footage (the preferred method of editing by more experienced video editors); and audio dubbing of a new sound track on to existing video pictures.

Don't get too carried away though. This power is very much dependent on the video equipment that the editor has to hand. If the decks involved don't offer facilities for time code, insert editing or audio dubbing, then it can't be done. Simple as that.

Furthermore, in order to make use of the Edit Plug at its most basic level, the source video player must have an edit terminal allowing it to be controlled externally by the Amiga. The two most common protocols are Sony's LANC and Panasonic's 5-pin RMC. Several video decks and camcorders adhere to these protocols. If you're unsure of this, give KRP a call. They are courteous and helpful.

Learning curve

The recorder can be just about any video deck on the market and it doesn't necessarily need to have an edit terminal. The Edit Plug can be made to learn the requisite infra red control signals of the deck. Once learned, control of all of its transport functions are in the hands of the editor.



Configuring the software to the video equipment used is simple, but not entirely straightforward. There is a pre-set list of compatible decks which, if owned, makes life easy. If not, a few more minutes of selecting a dummy, reconfiguring and renaming it for your deck has to be done.

A second screen enables the editor to adjust the decks for all of their foibles including pre-roll and post roll, insert editing, and audio dubbing. This ensures the utmost accuracy from the equipment in use.

With time code, it's possible to achieve edits so accurate that lip syncing can be executed. Without time code – we used a Panasonic MS95B camcorder as the source and a Sanyo VHR-774 as the recorder – accuracy can be maintained to within a frame so long as the shuttling back and forth between clips on the source machine is kept to the minimum possible. A commendable performance and one made all the more wonderful considering the price of the unit.

But perhaps the most powerful creative use of the Edit Plug is when combined with a genlock. By copying all of the raw footage from the original (master) tape – first routing it through a genlock with a time clock – to another tape, it is possible to 'burn in' a proprietary time code (based on the linear counter). This lets the editor watch this footage and note down the times where a clip begins and ends. These figures can be typed directly into the Edit Decision List (EDL) and executed as appropriate. When the editor is satisfied that the correct footage has been selected, it's just a matter of going back to the master tape and executing the ready and waiting EDL.

As a tool for furthering the ambitions of anyone in the video-related field, the Edit Plug is second to none as an entrance/intermediate level piece of equipment. It will grow with the editor and enhance and simplify the process of editing. At this price it can't be recommended enough. Go for it now.

Edit Plug

Price: £125
Supplier: KRP Video Services
Contact: 0141 762 2510

Verdict: 90% Star buy

Personal Suite

Unlike any other CD-ROM, Personal Suite is a collection offering full, latest versions of Amiga software for a fraction of the full price. **David Taylor** *gushes praise.*

The CD world is undergoing a bit of a change at the moment. Thankfully. Having published every PD title several times, publishers are now trying to expand their CD releases by coming up with something new. Into the arena steps this CD from Cloanto.

Personal Suite contains Personal Paint 6.4, which is one of the best paint packages around on the Amiga at the moment. So much so that it is included in the Amiga Magic bundle. It can do everything, well nearly. Stuff like colour reduction is a brilliant feature as is its ability to load all the necessary file formats quickly. It can play slideshows, animations and stereograms. The program is more or less a DPaint clone, offering most (but not all) of the options of that program plus a hell of a lot more of its own. Most users will find this is the only paint program they'll ever need, but professionals might find that it is better used as a secondary program in conjunction with an even higher-end program. As mid-range software, it's nifty.



Second helping

The second program on here is Personal SBase, a licensed version of SBase 4. This is a very powerful database which is a great addition to your serious software. It isn't the easiest program to use, which is why the inclusion of an AmigaGuide manual (as there is for every program here) is a relief.

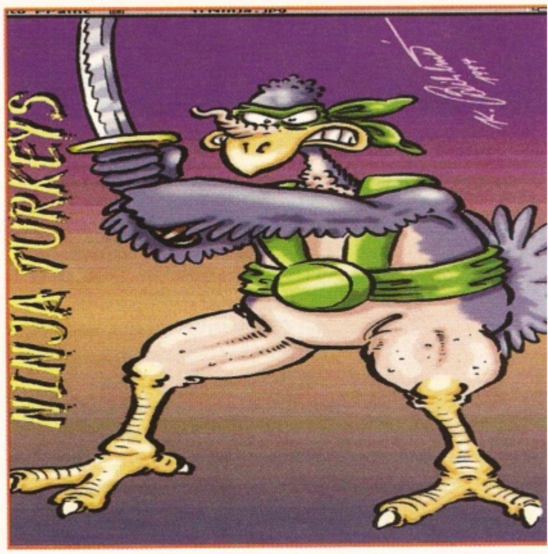
Personal Fonts Maker is a fully featured font creator and editor. You can do everything you've ever wanted to with a font from this program. There's even the second version with AGA extensions to allow you to create 256-colour fonts.

If there's a weak program on here, it is Personal Write. This is a reasonable stab at a word processing package, but most people who need a word processor will find others that suit them better. That said, it's not that bad, but I'm not sure that there is room in the Amiga market for yet another package – it's hard to see it getting the following it needs to allow it to develop. There are so many other excellent programs already out.

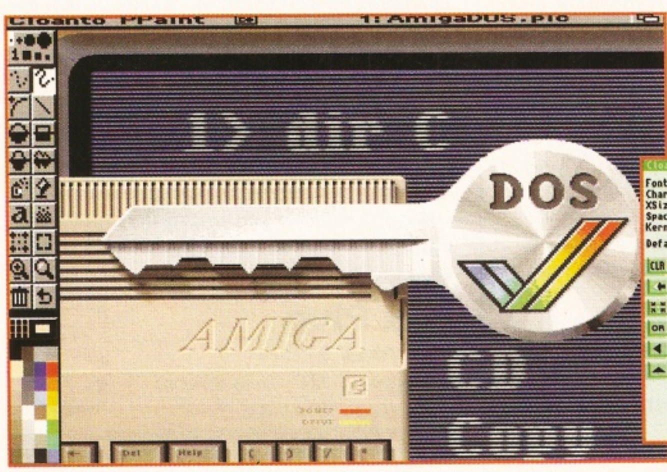
In addition to the programs on here, there is a directory containing electronic books. Here you can find some useful ones, such as the excellent on-line DOS manual and also one for ARexx. There's also a set of electronic classics, from Alice In Wonderland to Tarzan On Mars (did I say "classics"?) and A Christmas Carol (ah, that's better). This is an unusual and eclectic set of texts and it's good to see CD-ROM space used for this purpose.

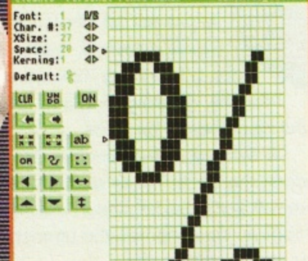
There is also a massive selection of animations and pictures. There are, for example, all the Eric Schwarz (except three for copyright reasons) animations. These are not only supplied in the original formats, like Moviemaker, Cloanto have also grabbed the animations frame-by-frame and restructured them as standard anim files. This is amazing and must have been both painstaking and time consuming. One of the annoying things about these animations has been the format that stops you taking a frame from it or loading it into any package. Hats off to Cloanto!

Is that all? Nope, there's also a selection of fonts licensed from Kara Computer Graphics. These are all nice, but best of all (my favourite anyway) is an animated font called Bullion. The letters rotate in to appear. It's very cool.



Personal Paint can handle most screen and file formats – like this odd one from the CD itself.





Personal Paint 6.4 (left) is the best program on here, but there are other good ones, such as Personal Fonts Maker (below).

Value for money

For £50 RRP, you are getting Personal Paint, which has the same RRP on floppy by itself, as well as lots of images and animation to use in it. You also get the font maker and a database. The word processor rounds this off to be the full business bundle with every bit of office software you need, except a spreadsheet (pity). There's also one of Cloanto's own utilities, DirDiff, which can be useful for comparing directories when mastering software. This CD offers exceptional value for money. A stupendous buy. ■

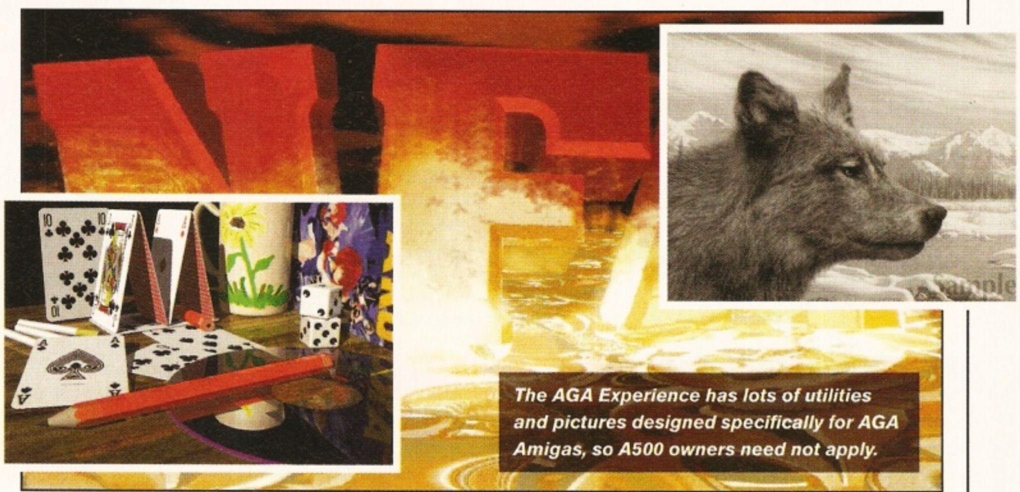
Personal Suite

Price: £49.95
Supplier: Emerald Creative Tech
Contact: 0181 715 8866
Verdict: 95% Star buy

CD check out

David Taylor *shuffles wildly through the stack of CD-ROMs on his desk to find the aces in the deck...*

Because there are so many CDs about at the moment, we just don't have the room to feature them all in depth. So we've reviewed the best disc in full, and then mentioned a few of the rest.



The AGA Experience has lots of utilities and pictures designed specifically for AGA Amigas, so A500 owners need not apply.

The AGA Experience

NFA, the PD house that produces its own products, has teamed up with Sadeness PD to produce a CD dedicated to users with AGA machines. It is extraordinary that a three-year-old machine only now has an AGA-specific CD launched for it. Given that A1200s are one of the easiest Amigas to attach a CD drive to, it's surprising that this large chunk of users has been left uncatered for. OK, most CDs *can* be used on AGA machines and usually contain stuff for them. However, this CD will be a big puller for AGA owners if it's any good. And it is.

The CD is laid out sensibly and much of the stuff can be used directly from the CD (although you must click on the Set-Up icon to sort out assigns first. You can also set the palette and fonts up by clicking on an icon). The idea behind this is that with 600Mb on offer, it saves time when run directly from the CD. Some of the utilities and programs are quite old, but given that the idea was to create the best possible CD for AGA owners, it's better than sticking any rubbish on there, just because it's new. There's plenty to keep you occupied. In addition to the utilities, there's a selection of pictures (which are few, but nice), modules (ditto), demos (loads), 3D objects (surprise) and games. Er, shouldn't mention those, should I? (Well, there are quite a few and they're good.)

Although much of the stuff is set to run directly from the disc, there are hundreds of self-extractinf DMS files to go to floppy. These contain yet more demos and animations. This makes the amount of data on this disc almost as extensive as on other archived CDs. With over 600Mb, you can't complain that files aren't archived. It is a blessing. The other nice thing is that some of the data on here is NFA's own, which means that it isn't going to be duplicated on anyone else CDs. What can I say? I like it.



LightROM 3 has the best of the first two, together with even more 3D stuff.

AGA Experience

Price:	£19.99
Supplier:	Sadeness PD
Contact:	01263 722169

Verdict: 90% Star buy

CD release guide

The release of CD-ROMs has seen another spurt recently and we just haven't the room to cover them all in depth. Here's a brief guide to some of those we haven't covered.

World Info '95 is a virtual guide to the world. To use it, you need to have MUI and AMosaic running. It's a brilliant CD with a wealth of information on each country, including things like population, size and even telephone codes. Although the information is well presented using the HTML language (hence the need for AMosaic), it would've been better if AMosaic had been included on the CD. As it is you need your own installed version before using it. Price: £34.99. Supplier: Active ☎ 01325 352260.

Euroscene 2 is the sequel to Almathera's successful collection of demos and intros from all across Europe. Although hundreds of demos are released, it's actually not that easy to find them because very few make it on to Aminet. Even PD Houses only stock a selection of those released. This CD brings you as many as you could hope for. They are all archived using standard archivers, such as LHA or DMS (most are DMS files, due to the non-DOS nature of demo disks), so you do get a hell of a lot. Price: £14.99. Supplier: Almathera ☎ 0181 687 0040.

LightROM 3 is a set of three CDs which offer all the files from the first two CDs as well as additional material. As you'll know the first two CDs have masses of objects and scenes for LightWave and Imagine users (there is stuff for Real 3D too). There's also 700 JPEG textures. The third CD contains over 1,000 digital elevation maps for VistaPro and World Construction Set. It might be less tempting to those with the other two CDs, but it is a must for 3D users without either. Price: £39.99. Supplier: Active ☎ 01325 352260.

The Fifth Dimension contains hundreds of Mb taken from the 17-Bit Software PD library. This is the fifth in the series and contains demos, utilities, graphics, games and music. Judging by 17-Bit's top-quality submissions to the PD section this month, this isn't a disc to be dismissed lightly. Because the files are DMS, you need to write to a floppy drive to retrieve the PD disks. The CD is Workbench 2+ only. Price: £19.99. Supplier: 17-Bit ☎ 01924 366982. ■

The music makers

With the Amiga back on the shelves and a resurgence in its creative possibilities, **Maff Evans** *finds out about ex-Commodore UK MD David Pleasance's support of the Amiga's capabilities.*

Tangent Music Design is a company with a mission. It is also headed by former Commodore UK top man David Pleasance. Based in a purpose-built studio, David and partners Richard Knox and Ed Fermor are working on a top-quality album of Amiga-based music to turn people's heads from the usual PC and Mac sequencing route. Amiga Shopper found the trio hard at work and managed to get them to talk to us...



Above: Richard and Ed from Tangent Music Design and their studio set up.
Below: Ex-Commodore UK managing director, David Pleasance, as if you didn't know!

What is the project that you're actually working on?
David Pleasance: We decided that another computer had wrongly claimed the de facto for music. We know that the Amiga's a better product, so we decided that we'd prove that we can produce quality music using the Amiga. We decided to call the album Everybody's Girlfriend because amiga is Spanish for girlfriend (to write songs about computers would be boring).

What kind of material will be on the album?
Richard Knox: There's some Crowded House-type stuff there, there's some rhythm and blues...

DP: There's a blues track that sounds as though it was recorded in somebody's bathroom in 1910. We have a solo flamenco guitar track, we have a pop song...

RK: In fact, the one thing that we decided not to put on the album was any techno or dance music, because we think that's catered for more than enough in terms of computers. It's not because we've got anything against that type of music, but we wanted to move away from it.

Ed Fermor: We tried to aim at a really live feel and I think we've achieved that. Everything that's been written has been done on an Amiga running Bars & Pipes. Drum programming on Bars & Pipes is a doddle. I'm not sure we could have got that feel on anything else.

How did the whole thing start?
DP: I first met Ed at the World Of Amiga Show, where he was demonstrating Bars & Pipes on the Commodore stand. We decided that we'd invest in a studio and we've invested fairly heavily. We were doing things at home at the time – Richard and Ed were getting their heads around the equipment – but the landlord sold the house so everything had to go into storage until we moved in here.

Why do you use Bars & Pipes in particular?
RK: Well, I used to use KCS, but the editing was... All those numbers. Give me dots every time.

EF: That's what's good with Bars & Pipes – you've got the choice. You can have your score up and a hybrid of the score. There are about a million ways of doing everything you want to do on it.

> "Tangent Music Design is a company with a **mission**."



Is your Amiga used for anything else?
DP: We've got a Sunrize card for hard disk recording.

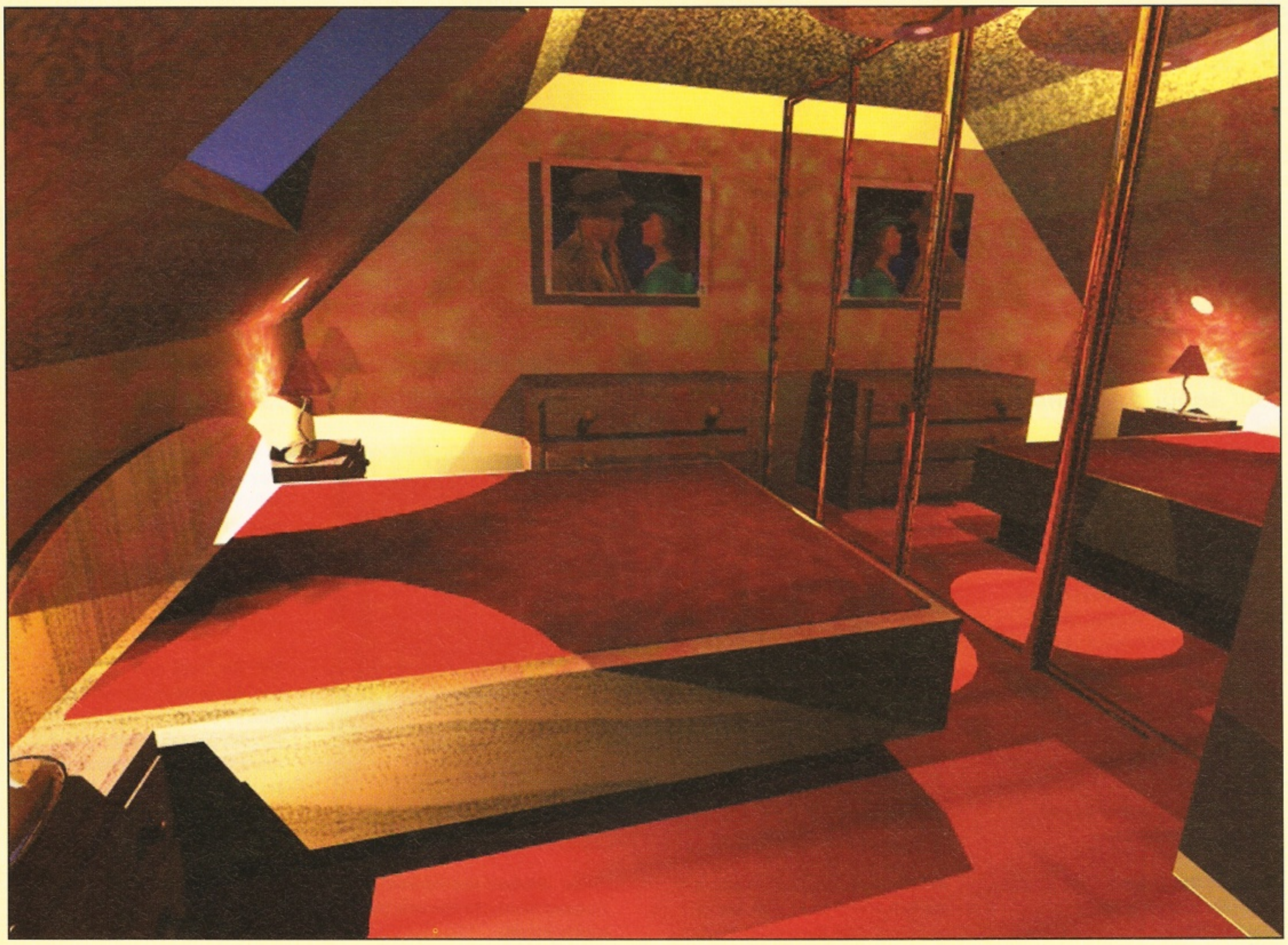
RK: There's a CD writer downstairs and the Amiga will be used for that.

EF: We'll spit everything down into the Sunrize, cut and splice it where we want, spit it back out on to gold disc and that'll go off to be glass mastered. We haven't got to that stage yet, so we can't see what the pitfalls are going to be, but I'm sure whatever they are we'll get round them.

What the next step from the album?
DP: There are two sub-headings on our agenda that are secondary to the initial mail-order marketing of the CD. First, this album will be used to launch Richard and Ed's career as a live band under the name Passion. Second, the album itself. We believe that the album is so diverse that it will appeal beyond the Amiga market, and obviously then we'll look to market the album through normal distribution channels.

Obviously, we're actively pursuing the software developers who are producing games because they all need music. They've been pretty responsive so far, so we're pretty confident that we can, on a regular basis, develop bespoke music for any occasion. We're also in close association with some people producing 3D graphics and rendering animation, so between us we can tackle any task.

Everybody's Girlfriend is only available direct from Tangent Music Design. It costs £11.99 (CD, plus P&P) or £10.99 (cassette plus P&P). To order, call ☎ 0181 573 5614. ■



P. Mallard used Imagine and his A1200 to create this image of his bedroom "as he would like it to be", apparently! Remember, even if your picture doesn't win here, you may still see yourself in lights because we try and use your efforts elsewhere in Amiga Shopper. If you want to win £25, send your picture as a JPEG to:

David Taylor, Amiga Shopper, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.



After months of top quality entries for our picture competition, we are getting fewer submissions. So, we want to know whether you'd like to see a different prize or even a different competition. If you want to keep this competition running, then please submit some of your efforts. Anyway, on with the Amiga Answers section where our experts have come together to solve a wide range of problems from beginners and experts alike. Here goes...



Paul Overaa is our Operating Systems programming expert. He has written several books, including: Mastering Amiga Assembler, Mastering Amiga ARexx and Mastering Amiga C. His main interest is in program design and he is heavily into the music side of the Amiga. Paul's other interests include red wine, maths and wind-surfing!



Gary Whiteley is our expert on video and graphics. He regularly produces work for films and TV. Gary has also written several books on his favourite subjects – amongst them is Amiga Desktop Video, published by Future Publishing (call ☎ 01225 822511 to order a copy). Gary also regularly reviews new products for Amiga Shopper.



John Kennedy is our hardware and music expert. John has written Supertests and features alike for Amiga Shopper in the past, including the CD-ROM Supertest in issue 49 and our monitor Supertest in issue 55. He has used his multiple talents to put together the Operating Systems feature this month, which starts on page 22.



Larry Hickmott is our DTP and word processing expert. He produces his own DTP magazine called Em and has written several books, including The Wordworth Companion for Digita and Future Publishing's books division. Larry has written the Business Supertest on page 28, as well as the PageStream review and the DTP tutorial this month.

AMIGA SHOPPER

Amiga Shopper's panel of experts have been busy agonising over your Amiga problems and they've come up with some carefully-considered solutions. Eat your heart out, Claire Raynor!

CD or not CD

Hardware

I want to do a presentation CD for a company showing their products and providing information for each product. I would like to use various programs on my Amiga 1200 which has an extra 4Mb RAM on a Blizzard card and a 209Mb hard drive. To do this I want to use MIDI music, graphics and 3D animation, and then use Scala to compile everything. When I have all the components ready, could I get the presentation recorded on to CD-R (writable CD-ROM)? Would it then be possible for a person using a CD-ROM on a PC to be able to just put it in and play, without any problems?

The problem is getting the Scala presentation off my hard drive and on to a CD-R so that a PC can use it.

Derek Heasley
Artane, Dublin

I'm pretty sure that what you're trying to do is impossible, if only that Scala presentations require a player program to run them and this, of course, would not work on a PC. I suspect that you're going to have to prepare everything on a PC, using suitable PC software, to achieve your aims. Get in touch with Scala UK (☎ 01920 444294) before giving up hope entirely, because they may either be able to give you further advice, or put you in touch with someone more knowledgeable. **Gary**

Answers contents

If you're looking for a particular problem, this handy index will help you find the questions which concern you:

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Heavy duty graphics

My work involves using very large 8-bit images (2-6Mb) which are usually handled on PCs or UNIX machines. However, I have an A1200 for personal use with 2Mb of RAM and a hard drive. I would like to do my research on it, for which I need as high a resolution as possible.

Can I get the A1200 to display 800x600 (Super72 high-res laced) without flicker? Is there a graphics board I can bolt on to get 1,024x768 or 1,280x1,024 without getting a box? A box would make it less easy to carry around, which matters.

Andrew Sawyer,
Southhampton

The A1200 has no way of adding an extra graphics card because it has no Zorro slots: and it's Zorro slots which all graphics cards use. If you aren't prepared to put the A1200 in a box, then there is simply nothing you can do. The graphics mode you mention is interlaced and so it will always flicker without extra hardware. Sorry! The A1200 Tower cases aren't exceptionally large because they are Midi PC Tower-style. Are you sure you can't carry one of these about? ***John***

Wrong size for Scala?

Software

I have recently encountered a problem when using my Vidi-Amiga 12RT in conjunction with Scala HT100. Newly grabbed images will no longer load into Scala as background images, though pictures I have previously grabbed load into Scala as normal. My work is done in ILBM format grabbed in 24-bit and then remixed as 256-colour HAM or 256 greyscale and all the images will load successfully into DPaint IV (non-AGA), Brilliance and Personal Paint as well as MultiView. I have made no recent changes to my hardware (A1200 with 8Mb Fast RAM and 80Mb hard drive).

This is where things get both interesting and mystifying. Whilst the grabbed images will no longer load directly into Scala, I have found that if I first load them into DPaint and then just save the image again (without any modifications at all), they will load into Scala with no problems whatsoever. On the other hand, images saved in a similar fashion from Brilliance or Personal Paint still will not load as backgrounds in Scala. It should be noted that Scala does not report any error message but refuses to offer anything except a blank screen, even though I can hear the hard drive being accessed.

Other artwork created within any of my three paint programs will load as background pages into Scala, so the problem appears to be specifically between the Vidi 12RT and Scala.

I have reinstalled Scala on my hard drive to no avail (the problem still hasn't gone away), so I guess that if the installation is correct then the problem is not within Scala. Likewise, the Vidi 12RT software appears to be OK because all pictures load into my paint programs without fault. I can only conclude that something has happened within the system software or Operating System to prevent Scala recognising the data generated by the Vidi 12RT.

I'm getting desperate for a solution since I use this setup to create multimedia presentations and, having spent three days trying to locate the cause of the problem, I am now in danger of not meeting my deadline with the current production. Incidentally, I don't think a virus is the problem because I always have a current copy of Virus Checker running in the background whenever I'm using my Amiga.

Dave Lucas
Beverley, N. Humberside

I sometimes have a similar problem to yours with Scala MM400, and I've also noticed that by saving the image from DPaint it will then load successfully into Scala. When I asked Scala tech support about this I was told it was something to do with the image size needing to be divisible by 16 (for example 320, 640, 480 pixels). If (and I can't remember off-hand) the Vidi 12RT is saving images which do not fit this structure then this may be why Scala is unable

to load your grabbed pictures. For instance, if your grabbed image is 762x580 PAL overscan then 762 is not wholly divisible by 16, and hence the problem.

So it seems that Scala is at fault here (for one reason or another) and that the solution would either be to try grabbing at resolutions divisible by 16 or to continue with the DPaint solution of saving the images and subsequently loading them back into Scala as backgrounds.

If you need more information try calling Scala UK on ☎ 01920 444294. ***Gary***

Text effects

In a recent issue of Amiga Shopper (56), there is an excellent feature on DTP by Larry Hickmott. In particular, on page 32, there is a screenshot of ProPage 4.1. It shows a page with the text put into shapes.

I have been a user of ProPage for several years and thought I knew this program rather well. This is one feature (text into shapes) I have never seen done with the program.

Could you please tell me how you accomplished this? I have been a subscriber to your magazine for several years and it is without doubt my favourite Amiga magazine.

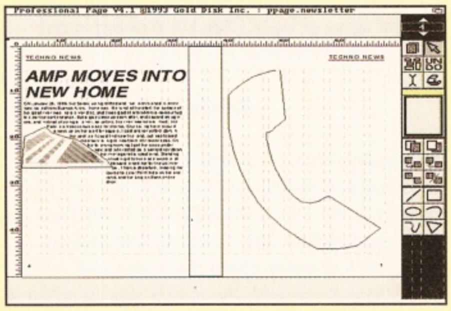
John Strzykalski
USA

The effect you refer to, which was of text in the shape of a telephone receiver, was created for a step-by-step tutorial in a book called "Step-by-step With ProPage". There isn't a feature for 'text in shape' in ProPage, but it can be done using two halves of a ProDraw clip.

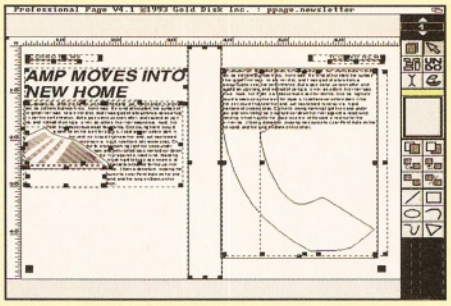
The effect was created by first making a block of flush justified text. This is so the shape is more pronounced. An outline of a phone receiver is then cut in two halves in ProDraw and then each of them imported into ProPage into separate boxes.

Like most publishing programs, ProPage can push text away from an outline, but unlike some, you can choose whether you want it to be pushed to the left or the right. This lets you tell ProPage, on one of the outlines, to push the text to the left of the line and on the other, to push the text to the right.

The end result is text in the shape of a phone. This effect can be used for many things like circles, cars, ships and millions of others. The only limit is your imagination and knowledge of Professional Page. ***Larry***



To create text in a shape, you need two halves of an object, each in its own box in Professional Page.



A block of text is also needed. Make the text flush justified so the edges give a clear outline of what the shape is.



By using text runaround on each of the two halves of the phone, the text can be pushed into the shape required.

Greetings from Poland

1. I have Imagine version 3.0 and I use the spline editor to make different logos and signs. The problem is that I don't know how to change the colour of a bevel. I have the same problem with LightWave 3.5.

2. Can you tell me how to convert objects from LightWave and Imagine to Real 3D v2.47 objects? 3. And how can I add samples and modules to animations?

Rafak Stachowizc
Swinoujscie, Poland

1. Changing the colour of the bevels works differently for Imagine and LightWave. In Imagine the spline object is initially saved as one complete object, which means that any attributes you apply will apply equally to all the surfaces of the object. You need to save your spline object and then load it into the Detail Editor. Next you need to split your object(s) into the parts you wish to be coloured differently.

Split the front, rear and side faces from the letter, for example, and then join them together as one object (assuming you want them all to have the same attributes, of course), and you'll be left with the bevels as another object. Set the attributes for the bevels and face objects separately, group them together as one letter and you're done. If you aren't sure how to split an object you'll find details in Imagine's manual.

As for doing the same with a LightWave object, first create your object in Modeller (use the Text macro for easier bevelled text), then use Display/Stats (or the W key) whilst the Polygon button is active. The object will currently have two surfaces, called (for example) A_Face and A_Side. Scroll to the A_Face name and use the Plus button next to the "with surface:" box to select the front and rear faces referred to as A_Face.

Cut these two faces (you can use the X key) and then paste them (V key) into another layer for safe keeping. Go back to the original layer and select all the polygons which make up the bevels, then press Q to bring up the surfaces menu. Enter a new surface name, such as Bevels, and press Return.

To check that you've made a new surface, and how many polygons it covers, press W again and check the list of names. You should find "Bevels" there. Next, go to the layer where the faces are, copy them and then paste them back on to the original object in the first layer. Save the whole object again, exit Modeller and load it into Layout.

The reason for cutting away the faces in Modeller is they would otherwise be selected with the bevels and hence have the same surface attributes, which isn't what you desire.

In Layout, select your bevelled object and use the Surfaces menu to set up each separate surface to the colour and textures you require.

2. One way to do this is to first convert your object/s to Sculpt3D format using a program such as Interchange or Pixel3D. Then use Real's RealConvert option (found in the Real3D drawer) to convert this object to a Real3D format object.

Another way, though I can't remember whether R3D v2.47 can accept DXF format objects, is to save your Imagine or LightWave objects as DXF files (or convert them with Interchange) and then load these objects into Real after converting them to RPL objects using the DXFtoRPL tool. I can't vouch that this will work though because I don't have a copy of v2.47 to verify the procedure since I've moved on to version 3 nowadays.

Please note that polygonal objects such as those produced by LightWave and Imagine will not render as smoothly as native R3D CSG solids, since they will still have polygonal faces when imported into R3D.

3. There are several ways you might do this, including using MainActor Professional or Scala MM400 software to load your animation and then tag your sound files to it. ***Gary***

An AirLink solution?

Egil Myhr Johansen, an Amiga Shopper reader in Oslo, Norway has written to offer help to Anthony McAtear's AirLink/V-Lab problem (Amiga Answers AS53). Here's what he (apologies if you're not male, I'm not familiar with the name Egil) says:

In V-Lab's menubar go to Windows/Movie (IFR) to open the interleaved frame recording window. Press the Rewind button and a requester pops up letting you load the script needed to control the AirLink via V-Lab. I keep my scripts in the VLab/Macros drawer. Your script will be executed after pressing Start in the IFR window. Example script:

```
/* IFR_Rewind.rx */
ADDRESS AIR 'OUTPUT IR< PLAY >'
ADDRESS AIR 'OUTPUT IR< REWIND >'
ADDRESS AIR 'OUTPUT IR< STOP >'
```

This script will put the VCR in play, then rewind and finally bring it to a stop.

Play, Rewind and Stop refer to the function buttons in AirLink and you must use the same names in your scripts as you have given to the buttons in AirLink. Place the script lines you need in the desired order, adding or deleting lines until you have the script you require.

If you need a pause before executing the next line add @ and a number (1 for one second, 2 for two seconds, etc.) for the desired pause time, e.g.:

```
ADDRESS AIR 'OUTPUT IR< PLAY @2 >
ADDRESS AIR 'OUTPUT IR< REWIND >
```

One final note – be sure to have started AirLink before starting your IFR recording. ***Gary***

CrossDOS troubles

Beginners

I do not seem to be able to format disks to 720K (PC size) using CrossDOS. I first mount PC1: (mount appears OK on the list using assign), and then run CrossDOS from the Workbench (at this point incidentally PC1: does not appear in the CrossDOS scroller list). From the Shell I type:

```
FORMAT DRIVE PC1: NAME PCDISK
NOICONS
```

But I get the message...

```
Format Failure: object is not of
required type
```

These sorts of operations work fine on my friend's A1200. What's going wrong on mine?

T Collier
Edinburgh, Scotland

Your Shell format command is OK although you can of course do these sort of PC disk formatting operations directly from the Workbench. The fact that you do not see a PC1: entry in the CrossDOS scroller however is significant and clearly shows that CrossDOS is not recognising this device. Assuming that your mount list entry is OK (check this), about the only other thing that would cause an error like this would be that the mfm.device used by CrossDOS is missing from your DEVS: drawer. If this is indeed the case you will find that the problem can be solved by copying the mfm.device from your system disks to your Workbench partition's DEVS drawer. ***Paul***

Spinning a web

I am creating a Web page on a Laptop PC with NetScape and HotDog. Currently I link my Amiga to the PC via the serial port. I want to use my Amiga to browse and create the pages.

I have an Amiga 1200 with Blizzard card (10Mb RAM total) and a hard drive. I want to set up XWindows and NetScape and a HTML editor, so I won't have to use the PC as much. I don't have anything like Ethernet or a modem. It must be free as I spend enough money on hardware. What do I need apart from the XWindows client amiwin.lha?

I would like to know how to increase the speed of transfer between the Amiga and PC. The serial port is too slow.

I also want to know how to make DMS files for making game demo disks.

Michael Ault

Do you want the good news or the bad news first? The bad news is that you really do need an Ethernet connection: and that's very difficult to find on an A1200. You should, theoretically at least, be able to use a serial link to run XWindows over a SLIP-type connect, but I couldn't recommend it because it would be awesomely slow. If you want to go this way you will need to install Linux and XWindows on the laptop (which will be a fun exercise in itself) and take it from there.

Perhaps a more useful route is to emulate another platform which can run NetScape: and the best is the Apple Mac. Using the Shareware program ShapeShifter you can run NetScape whilst using the Amiga to create HTML files in the background. The bad news is that you will need an image of the Mac ROM: which will cost money – unless you happen to own an Apple Mac.

Cheap monitors

Monitors

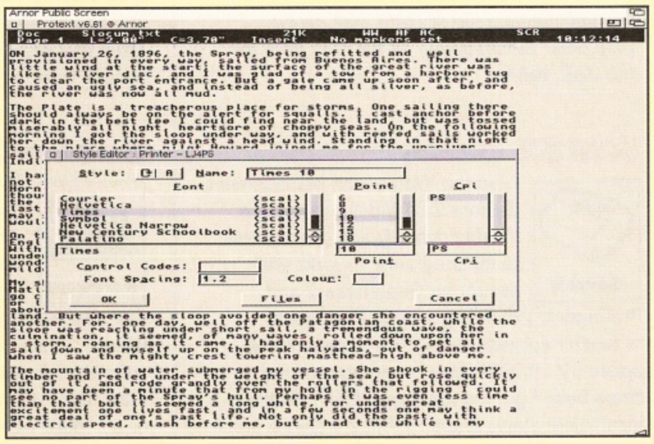
In the pages of your sister magazine Amiga Format, Microtrade (☎ 01938 556623) are advertising a Philips HCS35 monitor. I am tempted to send for it as it seems to be reasonably priced. Could you let me know the specifications of the HCS35 and tell me whether it would be suitable for use with my Amiga 1200 for DTP?

P. Naylor
Leeds

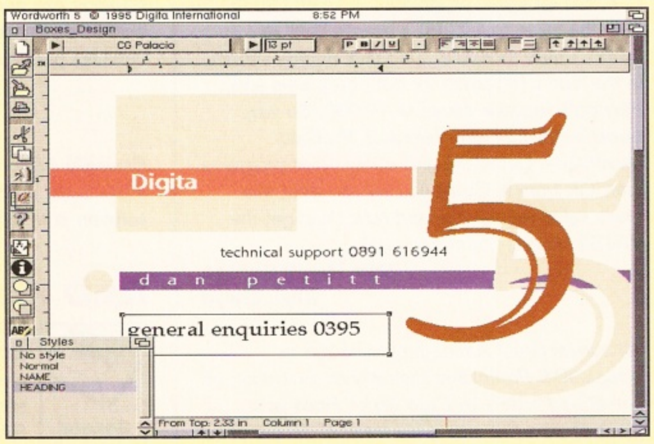
Without having used one, I am hesitant in recommending any product. What I can say about these monitors, is that the one you are looking at is probably OK for DTP, but there are other choices. The company concerned tell me they do three types with the cheapest being the one you mention. It is better than a TV and yet slightly down-spec from a 1084-style monitor.

It may be worth looking at one of the other models they do, like a Sony multisync, that will sync down to 15kHz. They do another single-scan monitor (which is what a 1084-style monitor is) that apparently give you a better picture than the Philips model thanks to the better quality Sony Trinitron tube. This costs about £20 more.

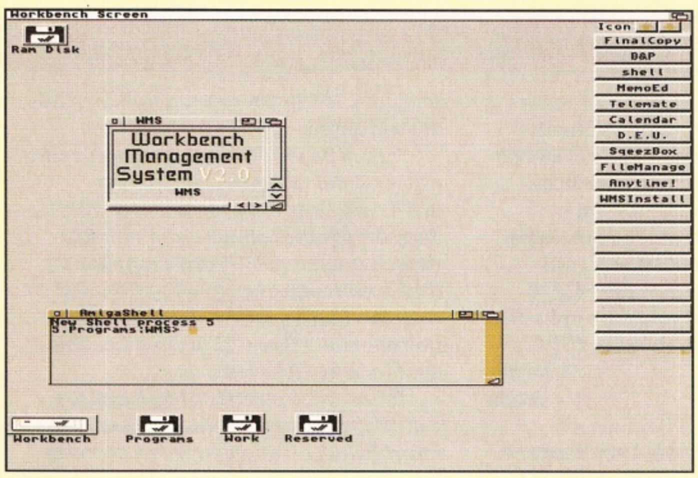
It has to be said that the monitors are second user models and have been refurbished. As such, they are covered by a three-month warranty. They may not have all the bells and whistles that more expensive monitors do. The multisync for example does not have a tilt feature for adjusting it and like the 1438 style monitors, you do get black borders around the edges. Larry



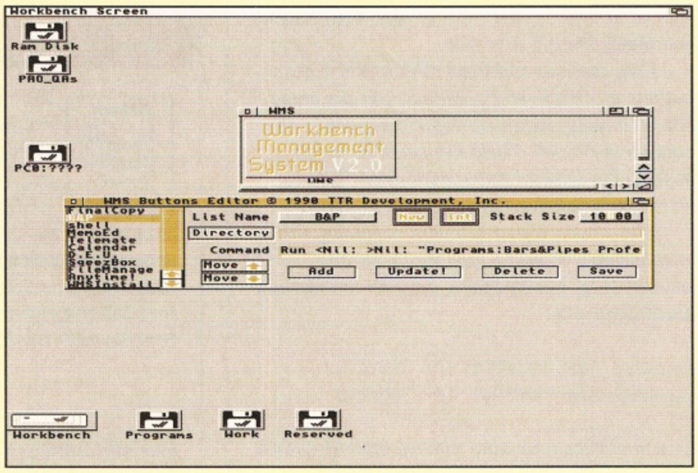
Protext is one of the few printers that lets you control the size and type of internal printer font used for your text on paper.



If you want more freedom so you can use thousands of typefaces, try a program like Wordworth 5 or Final Writer. They don't use a printer's internal fonts to the same extent as Protext can (in Final Writer's case, not at all), but do let you create very effective documents.



These are the buttons the user can select from in WMS2.



WMS2's button editor with the Update and Save gadgets.

There are several programs around for the Amiga specifically for Web page construction: HTML Heaven and Hedley are the two most popular. It might be worth using these on the Amiga and saving finished pages to disk for testing on the PC. Using a floppy disk is also a lot faster than the serial port, as you probably know. However, look out for programs like TwinExpress which will make the Amiga/PC link up faster and easier to use.

To create a DMS file, find a copy of the DMS program from somewhere – an old Coverdisk for example. Typing DMS by itself will list the necessary options. Unfortunately, the syntax is so confusing as to be ridiculous, so in summary you will need to do this:

```
dms read ram:plop.dms from df0:
```

This will create a file in RAM disk called "plop.dms" by crunching all the files from the df0: disk. ***John***

WMS2 blues

General

I use the Workbench Management System 2 (WMS2) to keep the Workbench tidy and give access to my programs. It works well except for Superbase 2 and ProPage 4. When I try to load ProPage a requester appears saying "insufficient stack space try 10,000". Also, when I try to load Superbase I get the message "Can't do this – Insufficient stack space." WMS2 shows a stack of 4,000 for these programs but when I try to alter the value to 10,000 it reverts back to 4,000. I have looked at the stack entries shown in the icon information for both programs and they both register values of 10,000. So why doesn't WMS2? Wordworth 3, ProCalc, MaxiPlan 4, Datastore and all my other programs start OK from it. Could you tell me what this stack value represents, and how I can get the WMS2 program to increase it?

Rev. Henry Gordon
Rhyl, Clwyd

All conventional Amiga programs run as AmigaDOS Processes (actually an extension of something called an Exec Task). From your point of view the nitty gritty internal details of what constitutes an AmigaDOS process are irrelevant, the bottom line is simply that they each require a certain amount of workspace in order to function properly and this space is known as the stack!

The WMS2 facility that you are having problems with is the one that launches programs that have been associated with particular WMS2 buttons. I think the reason confusion has arisen is because the button editor has both a Save function and an Update function. Moreover, it appears that using Save on its own does not cause the program to re-write the stack value entry in the file holding the button configuration information.

I think you'll find however that if you set your Superbase and ProPage stack values to 10,000, and then click on the Update gadget before using Save to store your settings then any altered stack values will indeed take effect. From that point on Superbase and ProPage should then run as expected. ***Paul***

Boot failures

Hardware

My Amiga A600 was fitted with a Gasteiner hard drive a couple of months ago and, although the machine was not used by me before this, I have been told that it has always suffered regularly from software failures. Since my hard drive has been fitted software failures on initial boot-up have occurred – as many as four or five in the first 10 minutes or so. More worrying is that recently this situation has been getting worse. However, once these initial problems are over the machine behaves perfectly normally.

David Morris
Sheffield

Basically, your machine is sick, there is clearly a hardware problem here and the only realistic solution is to take it to a dealer for repair! ***Paul***

RAD Mount Lists

General

I have 8Mb of RAM including 2Mb of Chip memory but when I try to mount more than one RAD the second unit fails to load. My first RAD uses this sort of mount list:

Device	=	ramdrive.device
Unit	=	0
Flags	=	1
Surfaces	=	2
BlocksPerTrack	=	11
Reserved	=	2
Interleave	=	0
LowCyl	=	0
HighCyl	=	79
Buffers	=	5
BufMemType	=	1

For the second mountlist I am changing the filename and setting the unit number to 1. Any ideas on what I am doing wrong?

T Collier
Edinburgh, Scotland

Yes. it's easy. Your BufMemType entry is set to 1 and this is the system flag value for Chip memory. With each RAD device effectively asking for 880K of Chip memory it's not surprising that the second attempted RAD mounting fails. To fix this problem all you need do is set the BufMemType to 0 because then any available system public memory will be used! ***Paul***

Hard disk errors

Hardware

I have recently installed a lot of my floppy-based software on to my hard drive but after installing one particular program, BattleHawks 1942, I started getting 'Vol Work: Has a checksum error on block xxxxxx' messages. I couldn't even delete the BattleHawks drawer. The rest of the hard drive worked perfectly, so I backed up all the retrievable files in order that I could reformat my dh1: partition. Everything went fine until the 60-65 per cent mark, at which point the drive hung but with no error messages. I can however format 2x20-30Mb partitions leaving a 15-20Mb gap in the middle so presumably the drive mechanics are not at fault.

Michael Harvey
Southwold, Suffolk

From the sound of it the drive mechanism of your hard disk is fine but, since your high-level reformatting has not helped, the chances are

that the drive surface itself has developed a fault. Luckily, you have backups of all your programs so it might be worth using HDToolbox to perform a low-level format and then carry out a verify operation to identify any bad blocks present.

Having done that you'll need to set up your partitions, perform a high-level format, i.e. a normal format operation on each partition, and then reinstall your Workbench and applications software from scratch. You'll find these operations detailed in your hard drive manual but, if you are unsure about doing this yourself, you might prefer to contact the company that supplied your hard disk. Most will carry out this sort of work, and re-install your Workbench, for a quite reasonable charge! ***Paul***

Printer fonts



I am a 70-year-old who now uses a computer set-up in order to write readable letters to his friends. My set-up consists of an Amiga 600 with a Star LC-100 printer and I use TransWrite, which does not allow me to import any fonts. This printer only gives me a selection of four different fonts (only two of which are suitable for letter writing), I had thought about changing it for one with a better selection of built-in fonts.

In the July issue of Amiga Shopper, I read your article on printers and decided that the Canon BJC-4000 looked interesting, so I visited a local computer store to inspect it. The assistant gave me a specification sheet printed out on the machine in the store so that I could bring it home and read at my leisure. I noticed that there were eight built-in fonts and 20 TrueType fonts. It all looked very suitable for my needs.

However, I don't have any money to throw away and so I decided to write to Canon to find out whether their printer would do what I wanted it to do. I pointed out to them that I use an Amiga and I wanted to select the built-in fonts for use with the Canon BJC-4000. I knew that I would not be able to use the TrueType fonts as they only work on a PC.

Canon's reply was: "Further to your letter regarding the BJC-4000, unfortunately the driver does not allow access to the internal fonts. Whilst fonts can be changed via DIP switches on the printer, these will be overridden by the software commands received from your Amiga."

If I can't use the built-in fonts or TrueType fonts, what use is the printer? I can't see how you can give it 88 per cent unless you have a program which will override the Amiga output.

Ken Brown
South Yorkshire

There are actually two ways a printer can output text from an Amiga. One is using its own internal printer fonts and to do that you need a program that will let you do this. I am writing this answer in Protext 6.61 and a quick check of its printer drivers tells me there isn't one for the BJC-4000. There are, however, many others for Canon printers like the BJ-200, BJ-230 (A3 model) and the BJC-600. These printer drivers (with Protext) will let you mix fonts on your page that are internal to that printer.

In my experience, Protext is one of the best programs for making use of a printer's internal fonts. If you have our Protext 4.3 Coverdisks (AS53/AS54), you might like to check them out because it too will have printer drivers for many older printers within your price range. It may even support your Star LC-100.

The other way a printer can output text is graphically. In other words, instead of the Amiga sending a text file to the printer, the software you are using, Final Copy or Wordworth for example, would send an almost (the resolution maybe different) identical copy of the page you have on-screen to your printer a strip at a time.

This takes longer to print of course, but lets you use the Amiga outline fonts that come with many of these modern word processors. This is one reason why word processors like Wordworth are popular because you can mix different outline fonts from the Amiga (not the printer) with pictures to create great-looking pages.

Text-based word processors, which is what you using, are not so popular because you don't get the same flexibility in the way a page looks. The reason the BJC-4000 received such a good mark is because when using it from the most popular type of programs like Wordworth, Final Writer and ProPage, the output was very good. To be honest, with so few people using text-based word processors with printers like that, I don't put a lot of emphasis on the area you mention when giving out marks. ***Larry*** ■

Fill in and get answers to your questions AS**58**

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Send your form and question to: Amiga Answers, Amiga Shopper, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Name: ______

Address: ______

______

______ **Post code** ______

Your machine:

☐ **A500** ☐ **A500 Plus** ☐ **A600** ☐ **A1000**
☐ **A1200** ☐ **A1500** ☐ **A2000** ☐ **A3000**
☐ **A4000**

Approximate age of machine: ______

Kickstart version (displayed at the "insert Workbench" prompt)

☐ **1.2** ☐ **1.3** ☐ **2.x** ☐ **3.x**

Workbench revision (written on the Workbench disk)

☐ **1.2** ☐ **1.3** ☐ **1.3.2** ☐ **2.04/2.05**
☐ **2.1** ☐ **3.0**

PCB revision (if known). Do not take your machine apart just to look for this! ______

Total memory fitted (see AVAIL in Shell for Workbench 1.3) ______

Chip memory available (see AVAIL in Shell) ______

Agnus chip (if known) ______

Extra drive #1 (3.5in/5.25in) as DF : Manufacturer ______

Extra drive #2 (3.5in/5.25in) as DF : Manufacturer ______

Hard disk: ______ **Mb as DH** ______ **:**

Manufacturer ______

Extra RAM fitted – type, size in Mb and manufacturer ______

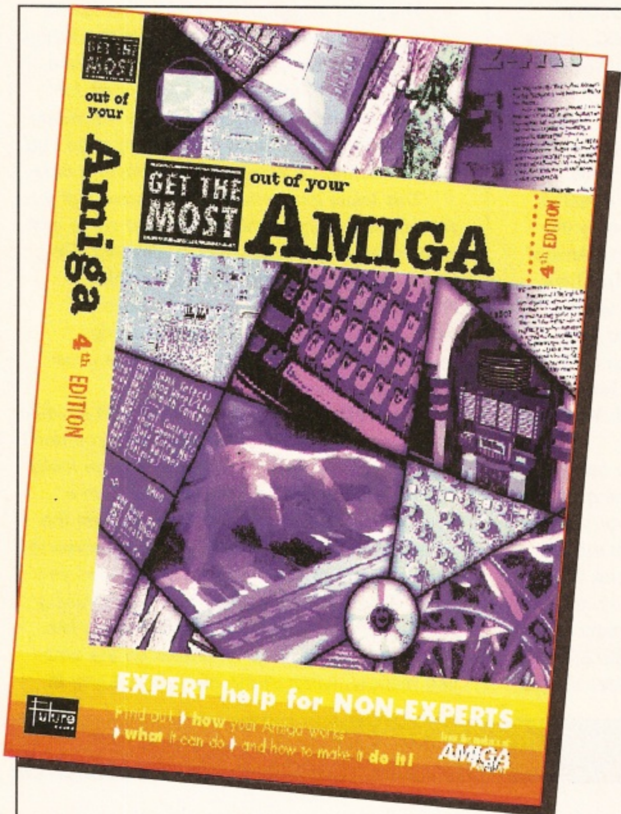
Please indicate details of any other hardware which could help us to answer your question:

______

Now, use this space to describe your problem, including as much relevant information as possible. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

______

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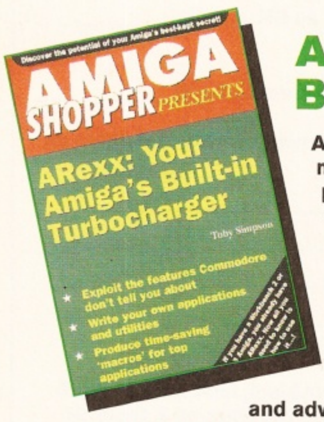
Understanding your Amiga
Section A gives you the low down on how your Amiga works, including all the hardware and software. There's even a glossary covering all the terms that you are ever likely to come across.

What your Amiga can do
Section B helps you to explore in depth the myriad of possible uses for your Amiga, for example DTP, Comms, programming, Amiga games, music, graphics and multimedia. Again, there's a full glossary at the end of the section to ensure that you are familiar with all the technical terms.

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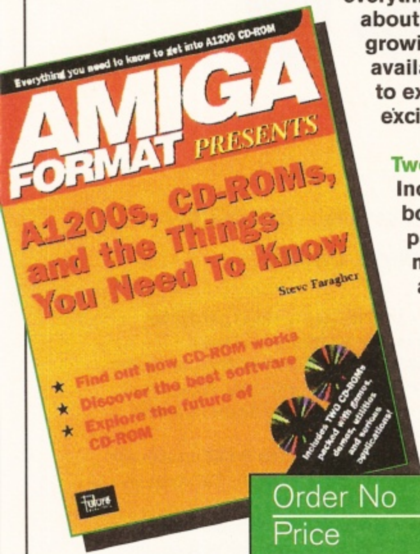
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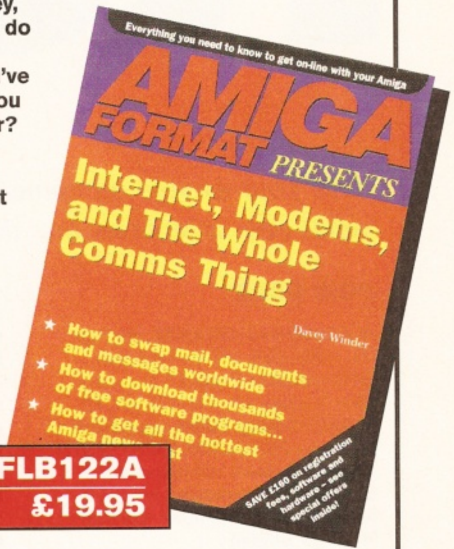
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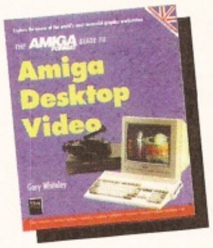
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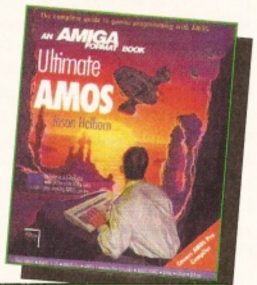
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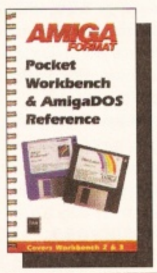
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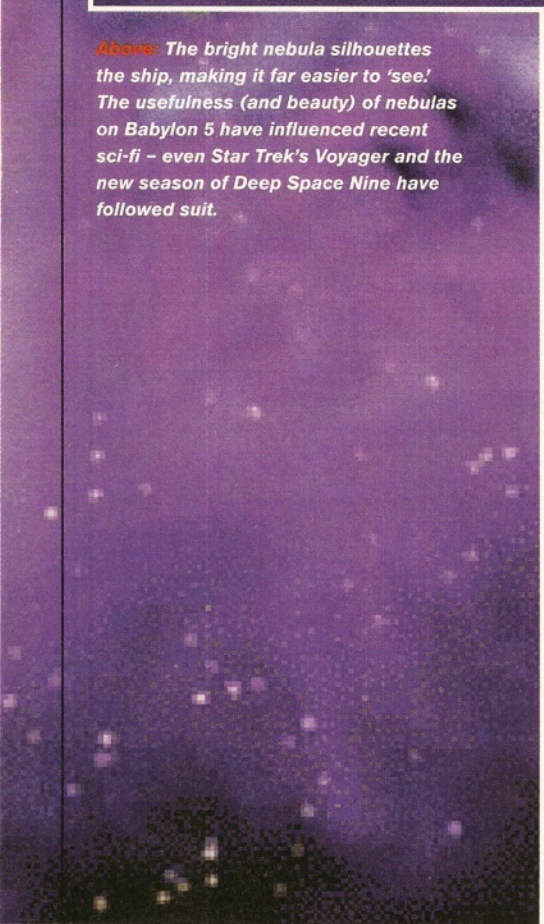
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The Babylon 5 galaxy-o-matic

Part I



Mojo's back and this month he passes on a few secrets about how Foundation Imaging creates Babylon 5's individual style.



***Above:** The bright nebula silhouettes the ship, making it far easier to 'see.' The usefulness (and beauty) of nebulas on Babylon 5 have influenced recent sci-fi – even Star Trek's Voyager and the new season of Deep Space Nine have followed suit.*

As soon as someone gets home with a 3D animation package, the first thing they do is make a space scene. Load up a Public Domain X-Wing Fighter, figure out how to get some stars in there, and – hey presto! Your first 3D epic in under a minute. Why is this? Probably because it's easy. Black background, a couple of white dots and a free object. In fact, I'm surprised someone didn't make Babylon 5 ages ago...

Wait a second... If that's true, why do 99 per cent of all the space demo reels we get at Foundation Imaging stink? Why do so many people keep asking us how we do our space scenes? Hmmm.... I'm starting to get the feeling that maybe it's not as easy as everyone thinks it is. If this is indeed the case, maybe I should insure my job security and keep all these secrets to myself. Don't you agree? No? Well, I suppose I could give away one or two... After all, you guys are in Europe! You're not going anywhere! Certainly not to Los Angeles to steal my job.

Enough waffle! From here on in you'll be provided with nothing but cold, hard facts on how to make great-looking space scenes.

Sky full of stars

What seems like the simplest part of a good space scene actually isn't: making stars. Most of the time, people load up one of LightWave's default starfield objects and leave it at that. This will go into the 'crap' category. While both starfield objects are certainly good places to start, they need a touch of help to look convincing. The Stars object has only one surface assigned to it, making for a very flat-looking night sky. Actual Stars is better, because it contains realistic star groupings and has several surfaces, allowing for multiple colours and varied densities.

Babylon 5 space uses a total of four starfield objects (yes, four), comprised of two copies of Stars and Actual Stars (each rotated to avoid overlap). While this provides enough volume, it still doesn't look quite right; all the stars look too bright and much the same size. One way to remedy this would be to load the objects into Modeller and assign dozens of surface names, allowing you to give various groupings of stars different intensities (by darkening the colour or adding transparency). This, however, is technically known as a 'pain in the arse,' so we have devised a much easier alternative: Fractal Noise.

By simply adding this texture in the colour channel (make the noise colour black), a very soft, natural break-up of the stars occurs. Since the starfield objects are so large, the texture size needs to be adjusted accordingly (try it at around 100 on X, Y and Z – reducing the contrast a touch may also look good). Experiment with what you think looks best, and remember to save your objects if you make

changes to them! Otherwise, all your laborious surface setting will be for naught (and get in the habit of saving altered objects under a new name – you may want to go back to the original some day).

Another surfacing hint is to remember to use the 'Save and Load Surfaces' option. After a few hits of cider, even the best animators often forget about this feature and laboriously alter dozens of surfaces by hand when all that was necessary was a few simple mouse clicks (don't fret – loading a surface only changes the attributes, not the surface name itself).

Hollywood stars

Now that your stars are looking more like the real things, there are a few tips to remember when animating them. First, never forget that each one of these stars is actually a tiny object known as a single point polygon. These objects are only a dot in size, although they differ from normal polygons in that no matter how close or far they get from the camera, they will always render the same size (the particle size option in the objects menu sets the basic size of the dot).

This is how the LightWave starfield can be just a huge, hollow sphere – single point polygons will render quite clearly despite being a great distance from the camera. The absence of polys from the middle of the starfield is also generally desired – a filled sphere would make it look as if stars were passing in front of, or even through other objects in the scene. Just make sure that you don't create any objects larger than the starfield. If it's already too late, simply scale up the starfield objects – it won't affect how they render.

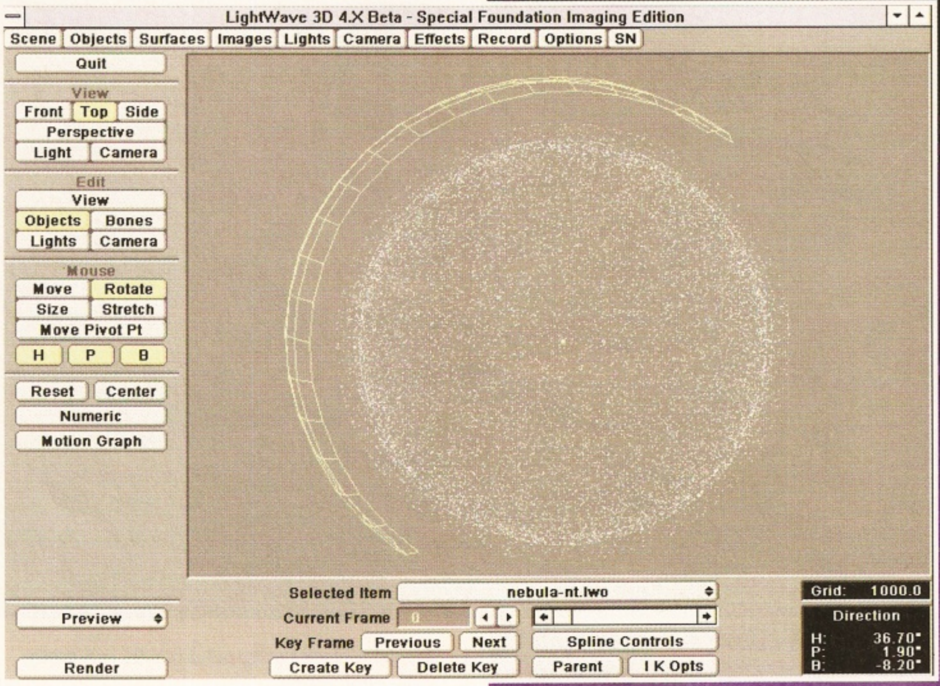
The most important rendering option when animating with starfields is Particle Blur (under the Camera menu). When this is activated, the stars will realistically streak as the camera pans past them (without it, stars strobe as they move past – a very undesirable effect). Since Particle Blur (which adds almost no additional render time) works independently of Motion Blur (which adds months to render time), make a habit out of clicking it on whenever you render a scene containing particles (another name for single point polygons). [See Punch it Chewie!] The default value of a 50 per cent blur length will suffice in most cases.

Big, bad and blue

Perhaps the most striking element in the Babylon 5 universe is the patented bright, blue nebula seen in many of the FX sequences. Not only is it pretty to look at, but it serves an important practical function that is essential to the style of the show.

Here on Earth, sunlight is bounced off everything from the ground we walk on to the buildings we walk into; this results in plenty of fill light – light that fills in the shadows cast by the sun (keep an eye out and you'll notice you almost never see a completely black shadow). Even in a room containing a single light fixture, light bounces off the walls and other objects to find itself cast into almost every nook and cranny.

In space, however, things are different.



Above: This is what the Babylon 5 universe looks like within LightWave. Note that the nebula is a curved polygon and rests outside the starfield objects. For simplicity, the nebula and stars are attached to a single null object; this allows us to resize the galaxy with one move instead of altering each object individually. In some cases, we actually rotate the null and spin the galaxy behind an object to make it look as if a ship is travelling very fast.

There are no roads or buildings or clouds or walls for light to get bounced off of. In most cases, light from the sun travels in a straight line and doesn't illuminate anything not directly in its path. This results in an absence of fill light, which creates very strong, black shadows. This means ships flying in space receive light only on their surfaces which face the sun – often a very limited area. If a craft's right side was turned towards the sun, it's left side would be almost completely black. The result? High contrast – very strong areas of illumination mixed with very black shadows.

Depending on what angle a spaceship was photographed from, it might be completely obscured by shadow, resulting in a predominantly black spaceship. Of course, we all know that space itself is also mostly black, so the combination of a black spaceship

Punch it Chewie!

In 1977, an obscure American film called Star Wars popularised what became known as the Hyperspace Effect (I doubt anyone in Europe has seen it). This can easily be achieved with LightWave with a minimum of effort.

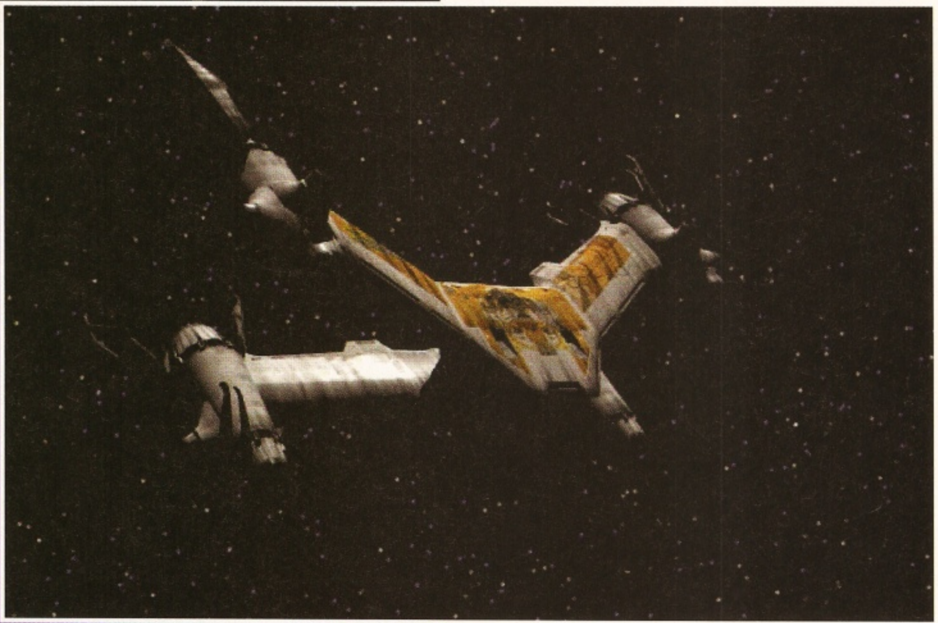
The idea is to have a large number of particles pass the camera at high speed and let the Particle Blur feature create the famous streaks. This can't be done with the normal starfield object (regardless of how fast you move), since all the polygons are located on the edges of a hollow sphere.

You'll need to make a solid block of particles by using the Modeller's Point Distribution macro. Create a 1,000-point block with a lot of extra length along the Z axis so you don't run out of stars as you travel down the centre.

Load the starblock into layout and surface it as you would a normal starfield (the fractal noise trick works just as well with a solid starblock). Place the camera at the beginning of the block and render a frame. Wow! Look at all those stars! In fact, too many. Since the object is not hollow, you're seeing all the stars in this object simultaneously. This clearly goes into a previously mentioned category.

To remedy this situation, you can add black fog to the scene or give the starblock object a distance dissolve (both will work just as well – simply adjust the values until you see a star density that makes you happy. The stars that disappear as a result of this will reappear as the camera gets closer to them). Create a new keyframe for the camera at the far end of the starblock (try at frame 90 or so). Turn on Particle Blur and render a frame. It should look just like hyperspace! Balancing the blur length and camera speed will help you adjust the effect exactly to your liking. Best of all, this type of particle-only scene will render at just a few seconds a frame!

For a more subtle effect, try loading several star blocks and move them past a stationary camera at different speeds. By slowing the pace and reducing the blur, you can copy the majestic, zooming starfields seen on Star Trek and in the first season titles of Babylon 5. Experiment and see what other effects you can invent!



Above: A realistically dark scene. While the moody lighting on this Starfury is dramatic, most producers would reject it as being too dark for an audience to recognise.

Below: Particle Blur and a solid block are all you need to recreate the famous 'hyperspace' effect from Star Wars. 15 years ago, the same effect took about £1 million worth of motion picture cameras and optical printing equipment. Viva Amiga!

against a black background results in a pretty awful photograph.

Programs such as Star Trek ignore this dilemma by simply adding lots of fill light to their shots. Where is it coming from? Nowhere. It's fake and unrealistic. However, without it you would almost never see the Enterprise.

Ron Thornton (Babylon 5's special effects designer) knew that this show had to look real, so magic lights and, therefore, fill lights, were out of the question. But how would we see the spaceships? Black ships against black backgrounds result in black TV screens! The answer? Change the black background!

By simply adding a friendly blue nebula, the parts of ships that go dark in shadow are still seen in silhouette against the bright background. The surfaces themselves still don't receive any illumination, but since the outline of the shapes can always be seen, viewers are never at a loss to know what ship they are looking at – even if there is no light in a scene. This way of cheating with nebulas has allowed us to portray spaceships as darkly (and as realistically) as we like, without worrying about visibility.



How to make a nebula

Although it is a simple scenario, many animators have been scratching their heads over our exact formula for nebula creation. Since I'm in a good mood (and Amiga Shopper is paying me so well), I believe it is time to divulge our secrets!

The nebula itself is a black and blue colour map (1,500x400) and was created in Adobe Photoshop, primarily with airbrush and smudge tools. The extreme length of resolution is necessary so the camera can pan across a scene without losing the nebula. More importantly, however, is that the image was mapped cylindrically on to a curved polygon – not a long, flat rectangle as so many have assumed.

If it were mapped on to a flat surface, camera pans would easily reveal the edge of the nebula. A curved, 180 degree polygon, however, will stay in view of the camera in even the most extreme circumstances. The polygon containing the nebula is also quite large, and rests outside the starfield; this allows stars and other objects to render over the nebula, negating the need for transparency (which takes a lot of render time).

Colour coding

Different coloured nebulas are created by changing the actual image map, not the object colour (in fact, some of the images appearing in B5's space scenes are actually retouched nebulas photographed from the Hubble Space Telescope – how's that for realism!). To get the most out of your image map, simply paint a black and white nebula and map it on to the polygon's luminosity channel, changing the object colour to your liking (although this limits the nebula to a single colour shade).

When we need to fill a particular section of space, we simply rotate or stretch the nebula into the desired position – the vagueness of the image generally prevents anyone from noticing the changes we constantly make in it from scene to scene.

A simple nebula can be made by starting with a sphere sized slightly larger than LightWave's starfield object. Surface it with Fractal Noise in the colour channel, with a texture size of approximately 100,000 on X, Y and Z. Make the object any colour you like and leave the noise black. Render away and you'll see a bit of background colour in your scenes – just like on B5! The sphere allows you to rotate the camera in any direction and still see the nebula and, as with the real B5 nebula, placing it outside the stars removes the need for rendering transparency. Beware, however, that the Fractal Noise pattern will take more time to render than an actual image map as we use on the show. Experiment with noise sizes and contrast to create unique variations. Be creative!

That's it for this month! Get cracking and make sure you learn the ins and outs of everything talked about here – next month's lessons will help you complete your own, private universe, thus giving you an alternative if you're unhappy with the present one. ■

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Extending E-mail

Part 1



This is the sort of thing that people like to use MIME for.

This month **Darren Irvine** *takes a close look at ways in which you can take E-mail beyond simple text messages.*

Even today when the World Wide Web seems to be the main focus of attention on the Internet, E-mail remains one of the most widely used applications. It's not hard to see why – it is an easy to use and inexpensive way of communicating with people worldwide.

The primary use of E-mail is the exchange of text from person-to-person, similar to standard snail mail. But just as you might sometimes pop a photograph or maybe an audio cassette into an envelope with a letter, so E-mail can be extended to cope with forms of data more advanced than ASCII text.

Encoding: why bother?

If your first experience with Comms was using FidoNet, then you might wonder why you need a specialised system for the exchange of non-text files. With Fido, all you need to do is "Attach" the file you want to send to a mail message and forget about it. The difference is that in many ways Internet E-mail is much less sophisticated than Fido and some proprietary mail systems. This is because the E-mail system in place today is essentially the same one that was put in place when the Internet was in its infancy.

The biggest problem is that the whole E-mail exchange system was only ever designed to handle 7-bit data. Although this was perfectly adequate for ASCII text files, almost all other file formats (such as graphics, sound and executable programs) contain 8-bit data. So the first step in sending such a file is to "encode" the data in such a way that it can be entirely represented using 7-bit characters.

Perhaps the simplest and most widely used system for doing this is a set of programs called UUENCODE and UUDECODE, versions of which are available for just about every current computer platform, and of course the Amiga is no exception. Most BBS systems will have a copy of both the encoding and decoding software, and performing an Archie search for "uuencode" on the Internet will return hundreds of hits. Try any of the Aminet mirrors first.

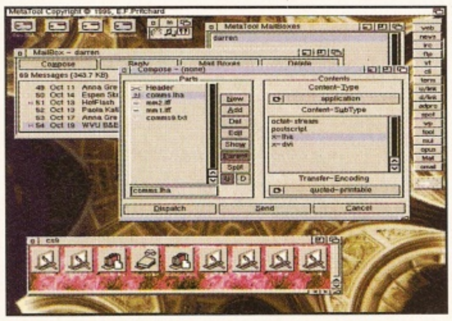
UUENCODE/UUDECODE has its roots in the Unix Operating System, and the syntax used by most of the implementations reflects this. Suppose you have a graphics file that you want to UUENCODE called "picture.gif", then the general format of the command to encode this would be:

```
  UUENCODE > PICTURE.UUE
PICTURE.GIF PICTURE.GIF
```

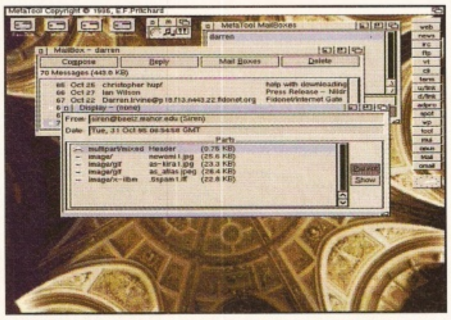
The first part tells UUENCODE to direct its output to the file `PICTURE.UUE`. This `.UUE` extension is only a pseudo-standard and you can ignore it if you want to. The parameter `PICTURE.GIF` is included twice – first to actually specify the name of the file to be encoded and secondly to specify what the file will be called once it is decoded again. You can specify a different unencoded name if you want.

To send this picture, simply include it in the body of an E-mail message. When it gets to its recipient (or if someone has sent you a UUENCODEd file), the format of the decode command would be:

```
UUDECODE filename
```



Create a MIME message using MetaTool by simply dragging the files that you want included in the message into the Compose window.



When you receive a message in MIME format, MetaTool displays the various partials, and allows you to view them in any order you like.

Jargon busting

Header: **The information at the start of a mail message relating to the sender, recipient and subject matter – the "From:", "To:", and "Subject:" fields. Also the line of a MIME message describing the contents of a given part.**
Body: **This is the part of a message after the header. In MIME, the body refers to the actual data in a given part, after its own header.**
Partial: **A piece of a MIME message containing a particular data type.**
MUA: **Mail User Agent. This is just a TLA to describe the actual mail program that you are running on your machine.**

MIME the hard bits

Although UUENCODE/UUDECODE is fairly easy to use, it does for the most part require command line operation, and never feels terribly user-friendly. A much more flexible system which is also more intuitive to use is called MIME (Multi-purpose Internet Mail Extensions).

MIME is an open-systems standard for the exchange of text and non-text E-mail. A message that has been encoded using MIME consists of

a series of data objects known as "partials". Each of these partials contains a data header which identifies the type of data encoded. The actual data itself, known as the "body" of the partial can either be encoded directly after the header, or "attached" to the original message. In this case it is referred to as an "external part".

On the Amiga, the only really useful implementation of MIME is the mail program MetaTool, reviewed last month. This program is an extension of a previous version of MetaTool which only handled the sending of MIME messages, and Metamail which only handled the display of incoming messages. If you are using a mailer such as Demon Internet's Mail or the latest version of Elm then you can add MIME functionality by using the older Metamail program to display incoming MIME messages.

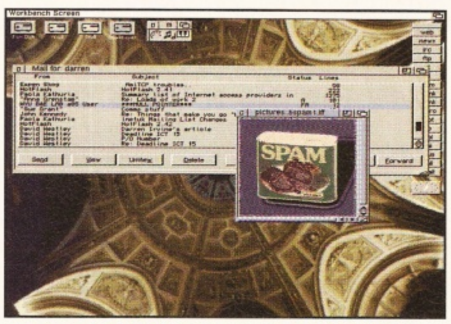
MetaTool functions in a similar way to most implementations of MIME on other platforms. The crux of the way in which incoming MIME messages are handled is a file called Mailcap, which is basically a look-up table containing a list of all the possible MIME partial types that your system has been set up to handle. Against each partial type is the command needed to actually display or interpret the data. For instance, the line in Mailcap which handles GIF data would probably look like this:

```
    image/gif; MultiView %s ;
label="A GIF Image"
```

This line instructs MetaTool to invoke the standard display program Multiview when a GIF image is encountered. Although the standard types included cover the more usual data types, such as GIF and JPEG for images (and IFFs and SVXs for audio files), it is possible to define your own data types and have them invoke whatever programs you like. The file which handles the types of outgoing MIME partials that you can send is called "meta.types" and again is a look-up table. This time it works in reverse, and when you attempt to add a certain file to a message in MetaTool, this file is used to identify the type of data contained in the file. Thus the line:

```
    image/jpeg              jfif jpg
jpeg j
```

tells MetaTool that files ending in any of the extensions "jfif", "jpg", "jpeg" or "j" are to be encoded as JPEG partials. Adding a new datatype is as simple as editing this file and



Get incoming MIME support with Demon's Mail program by turning on Metamail support. You also need to install the old version of Metamail.

MIME types

There are registered and unregistered MIME data types. The unregistered ones usually begin with an "x" and their meaning often depends on a private agreement between the sender and the recipient of the mail message containing them.

Registered types

AUDIO
audio/basic

IMAGE
image/jpeg
image/gif
image/ief
image/tiff

MESSAGE
message/external
message/partial
message/rfc822
message/news

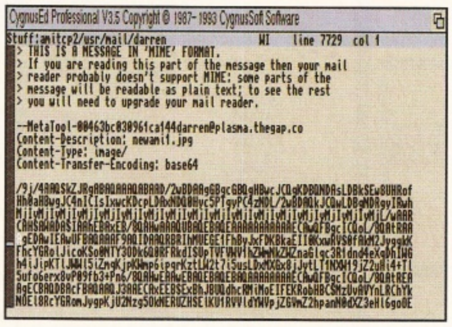
TEXT
text/plain
text/richtext
text/tab-separated-values

VIDEO
video/mpeg
video/quicktime

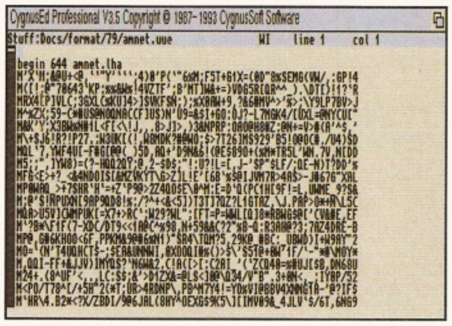
Unregistered types

AUDIO
audio/x-8svx
audio/x-aiff
audio/x-wav
audio/x-macaudio

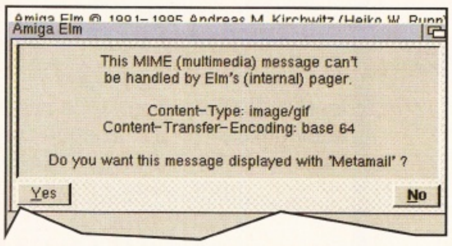
IMAGE
image/x-pgm
image/x-pict
image/x-portable-bitmap



This is what a MIME encoded message actually looks like as text – this is the form in which it is send across the Internet as E-mail.



And this is the raw form of an UUENCODEd message. Superficially it looks quite similar to the more versatile MIME encoded message.



Elm prompts the user when encountering a MIME message, which can then be displayed using the tools defined in your Mailcap file.

adding a new line, and I have added MIME partial types for AmigaGuide, Final Writer and Music-X 2.0. Remember, however, that the person to whom you are sending the message must have equivalents of any new data types that you add in their "mailcap" file, or the MIME system at the other end will not know how to interpret the message.

You can even define MIME types for things such as AmigaDOS scripts, but you should be aware that doing this can cause big security loopholes in your system. Say you've set up AmigaDOS as a MIME type, so that incoming mails containing scripts get automatically executed. How happy are you going to be the first time someone sends you a MIMEd message containing a "FORMAT HD0:" script?

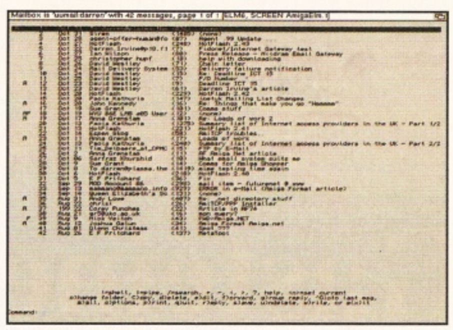
Actually using MetaTool to send a MIME message couldn't be simpler, because it operates on a drag and drop principle. You still have to use the keyboard to enter such mundane data as to whom you are actually sending the message, but after that the rest of the partials are added by simply dragging them on to the MetaTool window. The meta.types file is used to identify the types of data being added, but you can override the automatically identified data type if you want to (useful if you're in the perverse habit of ending your 8SVX sound files with a ".TXT" extension).

The future of E-mail

There are many new features and specifications currently in development for MIME. One of these is an alternative to using the slightly dubious PGP, called Privacy Enhanced Mail (PEM). This is to be eventually integrated with the present MIME standards, and, unlike PGP, will hopefully be completely free of any US export restrictions. Next month we'll take a closer look at defining your own MIME types, and also cover how you can set your Amiga up as a mail server – automatically supplying documents and other files from a special area on your hard drive.

As usual if you want to contact me about MIME or any other aspect of Amiga Comms, I can be reached on both FidoNet and the Internet at the following addresses:

E-mail: darren@plasma.thegap.com
fido 2:443/13.18 ■



The Unix port Elm also has support for the old Metamail system.

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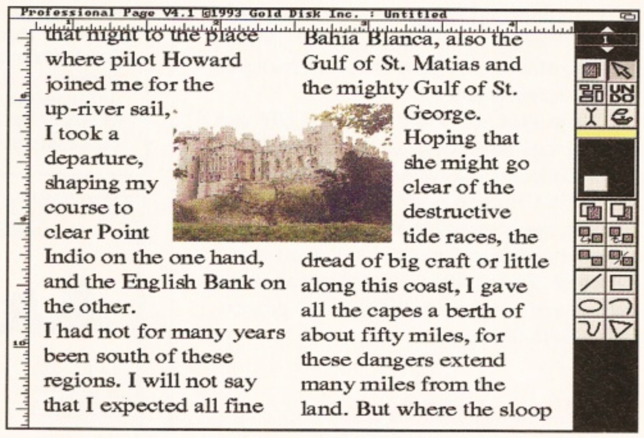
Planning a document is one thing, getting it together is quite another and how successful you are generally depends on how flexible your software is in handling the tasks you throw at it. There are two main elements to be placed on your page: text and graphics. The tools required for each element are very different and it's important to know what you've got in your toolbox before you start to paste up your pages.

The written word

Before even a word is placed on a page, you need to create some tags. Tags are often also called a number of things, like styles and style sheets. Whatever the name, tags are very much underused by the average desktop publisher.

Yet tags are an integral part of any publishing program and all major pieces of publishing software on the Amiga now embrace them in one way or another. Tags are required to achieve a consistent style for different pieces of text throughout a document. How many tags you require varies. In the magazine I publish called Em, I use nearly 20 tags. Whereas I only use five for my letters.

The number of tags you use for your document depends on the different types of text you have in it. In a letter, some typical tags would be one called Normal for the main text of the letter, another for your address, another for the address of the recipient and so on. This list would also include tags for any headings you may use within the main body of text.



Here is one use for text runaround that should be avoided. Too many users create pages where text columns are reduced in width by pictures. This shows a lack of thought in the type of grid used and recklessness in the mixing of text and pictures.

> ### Jargon busting
>
> **Cropping:** **Selectively choosing to show only part of an image instead of all of it.**
> **Text runaround:** **There will be times when you want text to flow around a picture instead of over it. To do that, you need to use a feature called "text runaround" which can be found in most programs.**

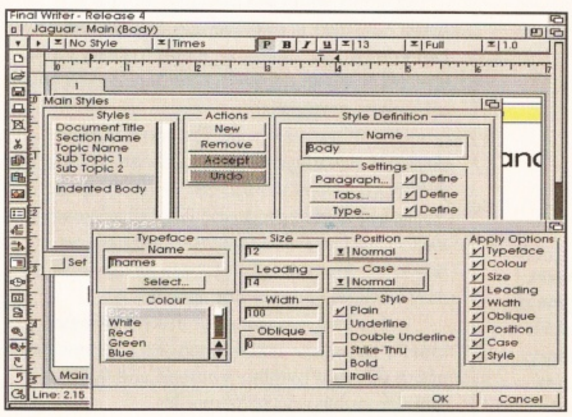
In a two-page formal letter, you may need as many as 20 headings, divided into two types. One may be 12pt Futura Light, while another may be 16pt Futura Extra Bold. Remembering what attributes each style of heading has can be difficult, especially when you have other things to think of like the contents of the letter.

A typical tag will not only set the font you want to use and its size, but other attributes like kerning, leading, paragraph indents, justification, text colour, text style and much more. A lot for you to remember, I'm sure you will agree. To help you out, programs like Professional Page, Final Writer, PageStream and now Wordworth 5, all have style tags.

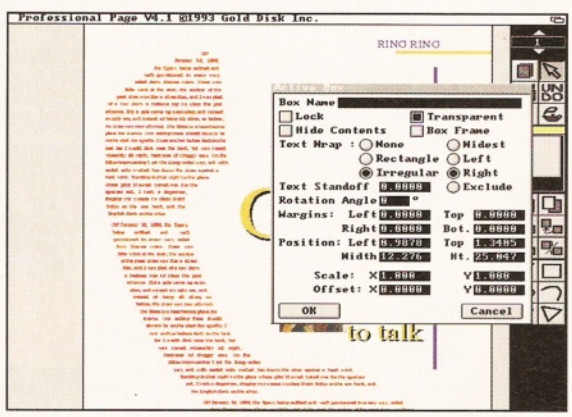
With these tags at your disposal, all you need to remember is where you want what type of heading and the tag takes care of the attributes for it. With all this mind, when you next come to format your text, try using the style tags your program provides for you. You will come to like them, I promise.

As well as tags, there are a number of other features that publishing programs provide to help you make your text stand out from the rest. When choosing the fonts, take a little time to think about whether the ones you have chosen will print on the output device you will be using. Let me explain.

▶ 68



Left: ***Most publishing programs on the Amiga let you create style tags. This is the panel for styles in Final Writer 4 which gives you a lot of control over the attributes you set for different pieces of text.***



Right: ***This a use for text runaround that few people think of. It shows that this function can be made to work for you in lots of different ways.***

Take ProPage for example. It has to use CompuGraphic fonts on-screen and so when I create these fonts using a program that comes with ProPage called Font Manager, I have to make sure that a downloadable PostScript font is also created because all my printers are PostScript devices. Yet, people with Final Writer don't have such worries because its fonts are compatible with all output devices, both PostScript and non-PostScript. Depending on which program you use, the type of problem solving you come across in completing a document will vary.

For example. Those of you with non-PostScript devices have to also be careful in choosing the right font. Many programs allow you to use bitmaps but these should be avoided because you can't get decent printed quality from them. Then there are your printer's internal fonts like those supported by Wordworth and Protext. These are fine but you will normally find certain restrictions in using them, like having a screen representation.

It is evident from this that fonts in DTP can provide many headaches, so think carefully about the format you choose as well as the style of font. I get so many letters where, for example, the postcode is impossible to read. By all means use fancy fonts where the text allows but watch out for pitfalls. Read your document through and be aware of text that may provide problems to the reader.

Adding pictures

A page full of text is a very intimidating prospect for a reader, so it's becoming more and more natural for us to add pictures to our pages. But this too requires thought. A good example of where people can go wrong arose the other day. A number of users contacted me after buying some clipart for their chosen program. Apparently, when they tried to implement some really neat ideas, they found their software couldn't handle the task in question, which in this case was rotating bitmaps.

This is quite a common occurrence because we get quite used to doing things the traditional way, where if you want to rotate a picture, you can. Doing similar tasks in software however isn't always as easy as it should be. Different programs throw up different problems. Here are two examples.

WIN! The publishing program of your choice

This month, Amiga Shopper gives you the chance to win the Amiga publishing program of your choice. All you have to do is to design a front cover worthy of being published on your Amiga. Please include a description of how you created your cover – which Amiga you have and the software you used, etc.

If your cover is judged the best, we will print your work within the hallowed pages of Amiga Shopper, plus, you can pick from one of the following publishing programs as your prize. There will also be 25 runner-up prizes of a three-month subscription to Em, the only truly independent Amiga DTP magazine – published by Larry Hickmott!

Final Writer 4: Now one of the most popular packages on the Amiga. Softwood's Final Writer 4 contains loads of powerful tools including Styles and the ability to have chapters within one document. It also sports a grammar checker, has EPS support and ARexx. Call Softwood on ☎ 01773 521606.

PageStream 2: Hot off the presses at Soft-Logik (☎ 001 314 256 9595) is a re-release of one of the Amiga's most popular DTP packages ever. If you have only ever used a word processor, then you'll be able to marvel at some of the tools a DTP package gives you with this fine program.

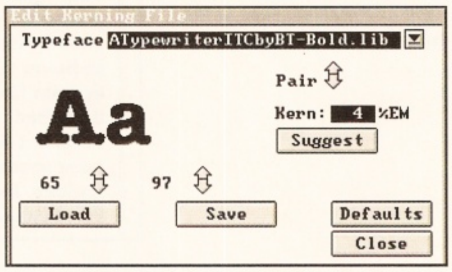
Professional Page 4.1: Another re-release, this is the program used by Larry Hickmott for Em magazine. ProPage has many outstanding features like user-friendly ARexx support, colour images on-screen, style and paragraph tags and much more of course. (LH Publishing ☎ 01908 370230.)

Wordworth 5: The new kid on the block, Digita's Wordworth 5 is set to take the Amiga by storm with a load of new features including style tags and ARexx adding to its already impressive array of tools. (Digita ☎ 01395 270273.)

To get your hands on one of these excellent programs send your cover entry (on a disk please), mentioning which program you would like to win to:

Amiga Shopper DTP Competition,
Future Publishing Limited,
30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW.

The closing date for this competition is Wednesday, 31st January 1996.



Kerning is where you can selectively set the amount of white space between characters in a font from within a DTP program. This is the feature at work in ProPage.

In ProPage, bitmap images can't have a background colour transparent while PageStream 2 can. So, PageStream 2 is more flexible when you want to layer bitmap images. But, pictures are displayed only in black and white in PageStream 2, while in ProPage they can be displayed in colour. There will be times when you require one function and another time when the other is more important. This is why many designers have more than one program so they can choose the right one for a job.

One function you should look out for is what type of structured graphic import support a program has. There are a number of good image processors like ImageStudio that enable you to convert bitmap images from one format to another, but programs to convert between structured formats are virtually non-existent.

This is an area where Amiga programs could learn a lot from the PC. When I need to convert a CGM to a bitmap or an EPS, I have to use a PC program because there isn't one for the Amiga. Not many of you will have the luxury of having a PC too, so the formats your program supports will need to fit in with the type of pictures you use.

This is why DTP programs like PageStream and ProPage are so strong because they support a number of structured formats although popular ones from the PC like CGM are still only supported by Wordworth.

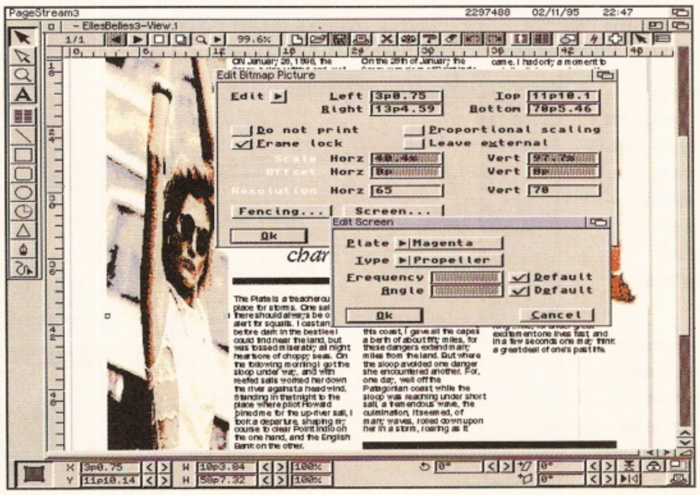
Mixing the elements

This is where the going gets tough. It's one thing for a program to let you have a picture on the page, it's quite another for it to let you combine that picture with text. An example of this would be to place text over the top of the graphics. Another would be to run text around images, a feature most programs have but many implement differently.

Use this with care because too many publishers dive in and overuse it. With careful indulgence, pages can be made to really look special, but with careless abandon, pages end up looking amateurish.

One thing is for sure. The tools at your disposal nowadays far exceed those we had 12 years ago when I started out in newspapers. Some of those in programs like PageStream will make your head swim because they are so powerful. Your job is to harness all the tools so they work for you and not against.

In the final instalment of this series next month, we will be considering the pros and cons of the different printing methods and functions found in publishing software. ■

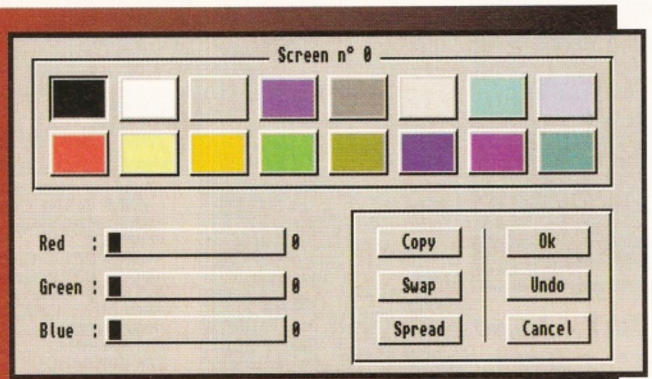


No other program on the Amiga gives you the high end features for the printing of bitmap images that you get with PageStream 3.

3D buttons part 3

In the third instalment of our AMOS tutorial ***Steve Bye*** *tells you how to use 3D buttons in your programs. Then he explains the mysteries of screen zones.*

We won't be covering games programming in this tutorial – we will be looking more at the utility side of things. Most utility programs have an interface and most interfaces have buttons. So you ought to know how you can easily use 3D-type buttons in your programs. To the uninitiated, incorporating buttons in AMOS programs must seem pretty daunting. Believe me, it's simpler than you think.



The rather impressive palette requester from Power Procedures. (Incidentally, subscribers can find the freely distributable version of Power Procedures on this month's Subscribers' disk.)

Button creation

When the user of your program clicks their mouse pointer over a button, the button appears to depress. This is achieved by changing the border colours of the button. A button is simply a box drawn on the screen using a series of Draw instructions. The trick is to use the correct colours in the correct place (see picture below).

The listing `1Button_Demo` is a framework that you could incorporate into any program in which you want buttons. This listing only uses one button as an example, but it would be easy to add more once you understand how it all works. Let's take a close look at it:

```
Screen Open 0,640,250,8,Hires
Flash Off : Curs Off : Cls 0
Colour 0,$777
Colour 1,$0
Colour 2,$FFF
```

This first two lines set up your screen. The three colour functions make sure the button colours are in the style of Workbench. Colour `0` is set to grey, Colour `1` to black and Colour `2` to white. Try changing the colour values and you may come up with a better colour scheme than I did.

```
BUTTON [100,50,150,60,1]
Ink 1,0
Text 110,58,"TEST"
```

The first line calls the Button procedure which draws the button on the screen for us. All we need to do is tell the procedure where we want the button and whether it is on or off. This procedure does most of the work for us.

The first four parameters are the X,Y positions where you want your button located on the screen. `100,50` is the top left-hand corner position of the button, `150,60` is the bottom right-hand corner. The `1` on the end tells the Button procedure whether you want the button in or out. In this case, we want it out.

Next, we print the text we want inside the button using the Text instruction. You may need to experiment to get the text centred correctly on your buttons. All of the above parameters can, of course, be changed to your needs, you can have tiny buttons 10x10 pixels, or huge buttons the size of the screen if you wanted to.

```
Reserve Zone 1
Set Zone 1,100,50 To 150,60
```

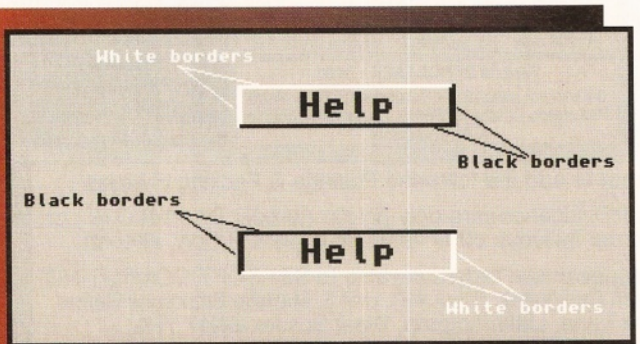
This reserves a Zone, so we can detect when the mouse pointer is over the button.

```
Do
MZ=Mouse Zone
If MZ=1 and Mouse Key<>0
   BUTTON [100,50,150,60,0]
   Wait 10
   BUTTON [100,50,150,60,1]
   'call your routine(s) here
End If
Loop
```

This is the main loop. The program constantly checks the mouse pointer to see if it is over the button (Zone 1). If it is, and the user clicks a mouse key, then the Button procedure is called twice. The first call depresses the button (remember the `0` on the end means "in"), the second call restores the button to its normal state. The `Wait 10` is there so the user can see the button in action.

It would be easy to add more button checks, by duplicating the `If End If` routine above and making the relevant changes. The task that the button represents would be a sub-routine or a procedure and you would call it just before the `End If` instruction.

A 3D button is just a visual trick. All you do is change the border colours to simulate on and off states.



```
Procedure BUTTON [X,Y,X2,Y2,STATE]
If STATE=1
   C1=2 : C2=1
Else C1=1 : C2=2
End If

Ink C1
Draw X,Y To X2-1,Y : Draw X,Y To
X,Y2
Ink C2 : Draw X+1,Y2 To X2,Y2 : Draw
X2,Y To X2,Y2
Ink 1,0

End Proc
```

Now for that all-important procedure. The first line checks for the button state that is required and sets the variables C1 and C2 to the required ink colours. The button is then redrawn using the coordinates you have passed to it.

You can type the "1Button_demo" listing straight into AMOS and it will work – if you type it in correctly. Why not experiment and add more buttons? All you need to do is duplicate parts of the program and change the parameters.

You will find the Button demo listing on our Coverdisks – see page 10.

What are screen zones?

You may feel a little daunted by the Zone instructions in this tutorial, so I will try to help you understand how Zones work. They are a very important part of writing interfaces for utilities, but whether you write games or utilities you will need to use Zones, so listen up!

A screen zone is just a pre-defined rectangular area on the screen, for example, a box. To set up some screen zones you will first need to let AMOS know how many zones you need. For example, if you have 10 buttons in your program menu you will need 10 zones, one for each button.

The instruction to set aside the memory needed for these zones is, unsurprisingly, called Reserve Zone. Reserve Zone needs to be followed by the number of zones you require. For example:

```
Reserve Zone 10
```

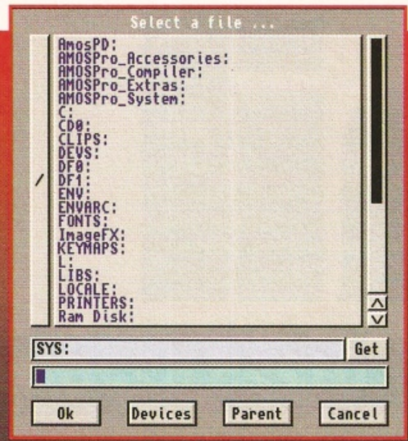
would reserve memory for your 10 buttons. You can have as many zones as your current memory permits. By the way, Reserve Zone without a parameter would erase any previous zones created. Some people do a Reserve Zone with no parameter first as a matter of course.

```
Reserve Zone
Reserve Zone 10
```

This can be useful if you change the amount of zones while your program is running.

Now that AMOS knows how many Zones you want, it needs to know exactly where on the screen you want the Zones, and the exact size of each one. The easiest way around this is to use the AMOS Box instruction to draw your buttons because the Box instruction uses the same coordinate system as the Zones do.

```
Box 100,50 To 150,60
```



Power Procedures gives you a new-look file requester.

> "To the uninitiated, incorporating **buttons** in AMOS programs must seem daunting."

AGA extension

In our first AMOS tutorial in issue 56 (December 1995), we told you that the AGA extension for AMOS was available from Amiganauts. Well, F1 Licenceware are now selling this extension and it won't cost you £9.99 as we originally said, because F1 have reduced the price to £3.99. For further information call them on ☎ 01392 493580.

The above line will draw a box on the screen. The first parameters are the X and Y coordinates of the top left-hand corner of the box, in this case the box will start at 100 pixels across the screen and 50 pixels down the screen. The second pair of numbers are for the bottom left-hand corner of the box, the 150 is across the screen and the 60 down the screen. This means we will have a box 50 pixels wide and 10 pixels high. As Zone uses the same coordinates system as Box, we already know the coordinates we need to set the Zone.

So, our next task is to set up the Zone.

```
Set Zone 1,100,50,150,60
```

Set Zone stores the coordinates of the zone in the memory reserved for you by Reserve Zone. The first number (1) in the Set Zone line is the ID number of the Zone; you will usually start at 1 and add to this sequentially, for example:

```
Set Zone 1,100,50,150,60
Set Zone 2,100,90,150,100
Set Zone 3,100,130,150,140
```

With a little thought you can use a For Next loop to draw your boxes and set your Zones, like this:

```
Reserve Zone 10
B=50: C=60
For A=1 To 10
   Box 100,B To 200,C
Set Zone A,100,B To 150,C
    Add B,40: Add C,40Next A
```

The above routine would draw 10 boxes and set their Zones.

So far, then, we know how to draw a very basic button using the Box instruction and how to let AMOS know where each box is. We now need a simple routine to check when the mouse pointer is inside a Zone and whether the user has clicked a mouse button in a Zone.

```
Do
MZ=Mouse Zone
If MZ>0 and Mouse Key=1
   Home: Print "You clicked on Zone
";MZ;" "
End If
Loop
```

MZ is a variable that holds the ID number of the screen zone the mouse pointer is currently in. The If part checks that the mouse pointer is in a Zone and if it is, it also checks the user has clicked the left mouse button (Mouse Key). If both of these conditions are met, then a message is printed on screen confirming the Zone that was clicked on. After printing the message, or if either of the conditions fail, then the program loops back to the Do part of the Do-Loop structure and starts all over again.

I have produced a very simple program to help newcomers to understand how Zones work and, in turn, understand how the program "10_Buttons.AMOS" works too.

You will find the listings on this month's Coverdisk in the Programming Zone (see page 10 for more info). ■

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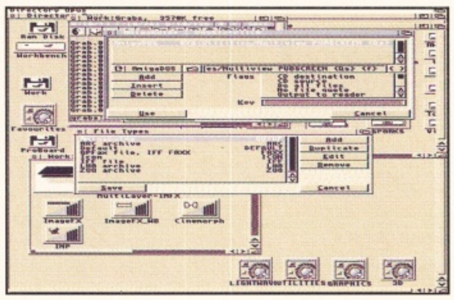
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Photogenics

There can't be a single Amiga owner who isn't aware of this powerful package and the incredible impact that it has had on the Amiga scene. The most talked about image manipulation package ever also gives you the creative freedom of a traditional paint program. Check out our Photogenics tutorials (AS48 to AS54) and find out what this great program can do (for back issues, call ☎ 01225 822511). And you could, of course, get hold of Amiga Format issue 69 and try out the demo on the Coverdisk.

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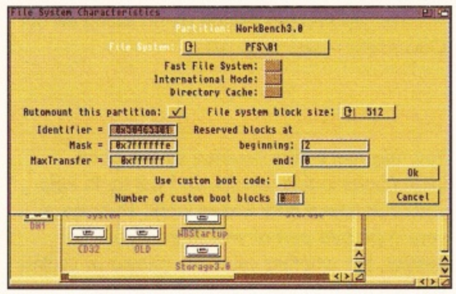


Directory Opus 5

save £10

The latest incarnation of this powerful and well-designed file manager received 92 per cent and an AS Star buy award in issue 51 (for back issues, call ☎ 01225 822511). Directory Opus 4 was brilliant and version 5 is no exception. Now this program can be yours for £10 less than the RRP of £59.99.

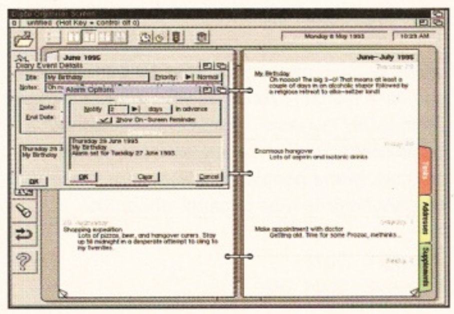
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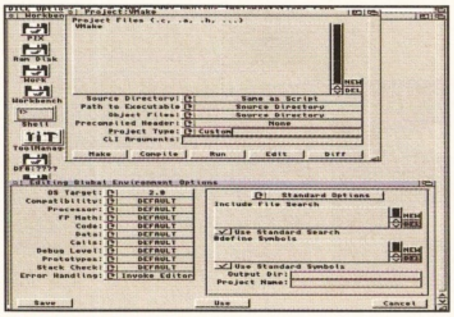
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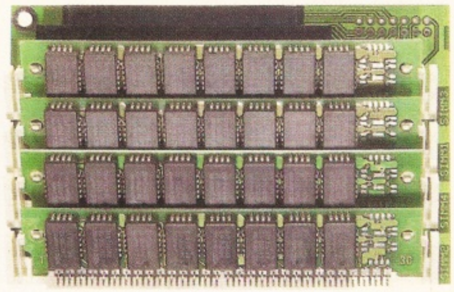


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Dave *slaps on the suntan lotion as he prepares for his holiday and wades through a mountain of PD disks that even The Shamen would have trouble moving. Undeterred, he dives in...*

Things seem to be accelerating in the PD world at the moment with more varied offerings appearing all the time. Please keep the submissions flowing in because we want to offer the broadest selection possible.

The X-Files Vols 1 & 2

The X-Files is a series that's gradually won me over. Sure, it has some ropy episodes and a tedious long-term plotline, but on the whole it's one of the best sci-fi series for years. Still, I wasn't sure that I wanted to look at two disks packed with text files about the series, probably containing a load of rubbish only really of interest to very sad people. Sorry to be blunt, but I have a life and better things to do. So, I was pleasantly surprised to find that these disks are actually the "real" X-Files, as it were. They are a compilation of text files from various sources concerning all things paranormal and alienesque.

There are two ways you can view these type of things. Either you can read them and go "Wow, they really are out there", or you can read them with scepticism, interest and an open mind. The first is, frankly, gullible – particularly when the files contain lines like "The Pleiadians are a collective of extraterretrials from the star system The Pleiades." Yeah, right. The second is much more akin to the Mulder and Scully of the TV series and slightly more realistic.

As such, these X-Files make an interesting read and offer some interesting theories. They are slightly too emphatic for my liking; they are perhaps too based on the initial acceptance of UFOs to be objective. However, they are definitely worth a read if you've got a passion for the unusual. As far as value goes, both disks have all the data powerpacked to get as much on as possible which is most laudable.

One small point is that the second disk had a non-standard bootblock for no reason I could fathom. Just to be on the safe side, I removed it, but I do wish that – unless there is a specific reason to do otherwise – people would use standard bootblocks. It makes us a lot less jumpy.

Verdict: 80%

Blowing Brain

This demo is for AGA Amigas only. It starts off promisingly, but ends up offering just a few too many swirling faces to be judged very highly. There's no doubt that the programmers are talented, and there's one part with a ball lit by

Who, what, where, when, why, how...

Product	No of disks	Type of product	Price*	Supplier	Contact	Verdict	Page
The X-Files Vols 1 & 2	two	Diskmag	£1.50	Smileys PD	See PD directory	80%	74
Blowing Brain	one	Demo	75p	Smileys PD	See PD directory	70%	74
Morse Code Trainer	one	Educational	£2	John J. Cassar	See page 75	90%	75
Tin Bin AGA Utils 24	one	Utilities	£1 + 50p	Mon PD	01248 714591	96%	75
Master Control Prog (disk U1156)	one	Utility	£1.50	Kew-II	0181 657 1617	90%	75
LunchPak 11	one	Demos	75p	Smileys PD	See PD directory	90%	76
Midnight (disk U1155)	one	Utility	£1.50	Kew-II	0181 657 1617	90%	76
Spelling School (disk A1112)	one	Educational	£1.50	Kew-II	0181 657 1617	65%	76
Navigator 2 (disk 3927)	two	Applications	£2 +50p	17Bit	01924 366982	99%	76
Graphic Workbench (disk 3930)	two	Utility	£2 + 50p	17Bit	01924 366982	84%	77
Tee To Green (disk 3924)	one	Utility	£1 + 50p	17Bit	01924 366982	70%	77
Ultra Accs & FinAcc (disk 3929)	one	Applications	£1 + 50p	17Bit	01924 366982	90%	78
Lyapunov (disk 3938)	one	Application	£1 + 50p	17Bit	01924 366982	78%	78
CLI Zone 1995/1	one	Utilities	£1.50	Professional PD	See PD Directory	70%	78
Virus Workshop (disk 3919)	one	Utility	£1 + 50p	17Bit	01924 366982	95%	78
Iconographics	one	Utility	£1.50	Kew-II	0181 657 1617	96%	79
Speed 8	one	Demos	£1 + 50p	Mon PD	01248 714591	90%	81
Phreaking Only 5	one	Diskmag	£1 + 50p	Mon PD	01248 714591	73%	81
Midicraft Samples 8	one	Samples	£2.50	Seasoft	01903 850378	80%	82
Nothing But AMOS 8	one	Diskmag	£4.50	Seasoft	01903 850378	80%	82
Kids Only	one	Applications	£10	Seasoft	01903 850378	90%	82
Midicraft Mag 8	one	Diskmag	£2.50	Seasoft	01903 850378	90%	82
AMOS AGA Extension	one	Utility	£3.99	F1 Licenceware	01392 438802	N/A	82
Touch Typing Tutor	one	Application	£3.50	Horizon@Seasoft	01903 850378	90%	82

Some prices include P&P; buying more than one disk from a PD house is likely to reduce the price per disk; check compatibility of program with PD house before purchasing. More information on all the PD houses and their prices can be found in the PD Directory on the.Coverdisk, including their postal addresses and payment details.



Blowing Brain is a full-disk demo that has some reasonable effects, but won't win any prizes.



several orbiting globes that is very good. However, overall, we've seen all this before.

It seems that the demo scene, after a real burst of life and originality, has once more settled into a predictable swirl of colours. Time for a change.

Verdict: 70%

Morse Code Trainer

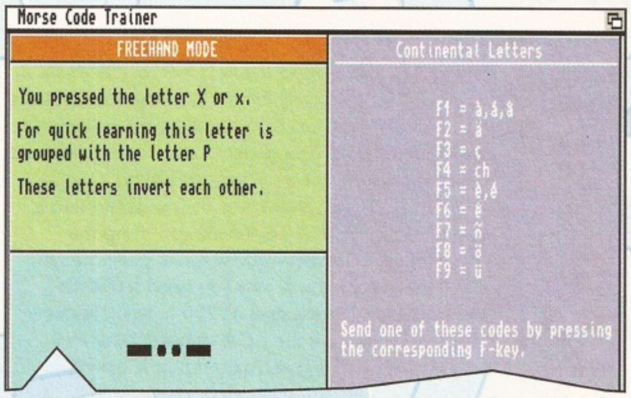
This is a really useful program. First, it offers a full range of ways of learning the Morse Code. Second, it can be used to severely piss off the rest of the office by going "be-beep-beep-be be-beep beep-be be-be-be". Send your ideas as to what that means on a postcard to "Morse Code Obscenities" at the usual address!

Seriously, though, this is an area of education where the computer excels. It is ideal for teaching a language consisting entirely of dots and dashes. The screen shows you this visual interpretation as well as making the audio sounds. There are several speeds so you can specify the number of words per minute. This is the answer to your prayers if you're trying to learn Morse Code.

You may wonder how much use Morse is in these days of instant communications, but imagine that you were kidnapped by the evil mega-corporation hyped by Amiga Power and wanted to communicate with the person in the next cell by tapping on the pipes. Then, you will be very glad of this program. Well, only if the person in the next cell has learnt their Morse Code too, of course.

Anyway, this is a great program and we shall be trying to put it on to next month's Coverdisks, because the author says we can. If you can't wait that long, it can be obtained from PD Houses or the author himself, for £2, from: John J. Cassar, 31 St. Mungo Avenue, Townhead, Glasgow G4 0PG. The registered version costs £5 and comes with another of the author's programs free.

Verdict: 90% Star buy



Morse Code Trainer is an ideal way to learn the language of dots and dashes.

Tin Bin AGA Utils 24

I love disks like this, where someone has actually put quite some effort into packing as many utilities on to a single disk as possible. This disk has 10 utilities crunched on. Some of the programs have been included on our own Subscribers' disks, but if you don't receive that disk, then it must make this disk even more attractive. Amongst the utilities are Ordering, a brilliant file manager, and Font View, the update of the program that allows you to examine all your fonts. Both of these are very good. There's also a very fast JPEG viewer and Remind 1.5, the smart electronic diary. BootWriter is another excellent program for checking bootblocks – a good way of avoiding some viruses.

All in all, this disk is excellent. The collection has at least five programs that serious PD users should check out. Needless to say, as you can guess from the title, the disk is aimed at AGA users, so you should have a minimum of an A1200. The most minor of minor gripes – given the OS needed couldn't we have used PPGuide or similar as a viewer instead of PPMore, which would have made it better for reading the AmigaGuide documentation properly?

Verdict: 96% Star buy

Master Control Program

MCP is a commodity designed to offer a number of functions within a single program, like MultiCX. Because it comes with its own Installer script, it's very easy to install on to your system.

The program can be started by double-clicking on the icon, which means it can simply be put into the WBStartUp drawer so that it works every time. The different functions, like screen blankers or simple extras such as switching off drive clicking, are accessed through a separate Preferences program.

This program is easy to use and has five "pages" of options – you can see that it's

The PD directory

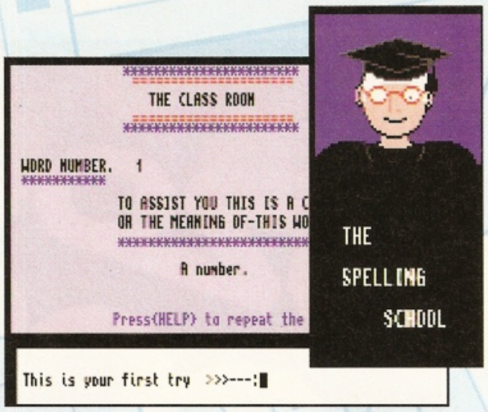
On the disk

You will notice references to the PD directory in the "Who, what, when, where etc" boxout. This directory used to be printed in the mag, but had to be in very small text because of the amount of information it contained. To solve this, we have updated and recompiled the list and put it on our Coverdisks as a text file in the Information Zone.

The Information Zone contains both the PD Directory and the list of User Groups (which also used to be in the issue). They are both in two formats, AmigaGuide and ASCII. The AmigaGuide enables you to point and click your way to the information, making it much easier to find the details you require. Read the ReadMe file for more information. See page 12 for details.



LunchPak 11 has some reasonable intros, but isn't a patch on the earlier edition we reviewed. Nice front-end, though.



Spelling School looks a bit dated and sounds as if the teachers are on drugs.

powerful. Many of the separate options have sub menus – i.e. which screen blanker do you want to use, etc. This program is Freeware, so registering costs no more than an E-mail message or stamp. For this you'll get the updates of the program sent to you when they become available. MCP requires MUI.

Verdict: 90% **Star buy**

LunchPak 11

This collection of demos and chiptunes is not really as impressive as the last. There are fewer actual intros on here, because they are mostly 64K demos, and the quality is below that of the earlier issue we reviewed.

There are also quite a few chiptunes, and the whole disk is held together with a good front-end, which extends to the chiptunes. Everything runs directly from the disk which is a substantial achievement considering how much stuff has been packed on.

You're getting far more than just a single disk – some of the 64K demos are actually more than 500K unpacked. There's also a bonus directory containing a nifty module.

Verdict: 70%

Midnight

Screen blankers are very popular utilities. And Midnight is a very competent program that comes in two parts, the program itself and the preferences editor. The big difference with this blanker is the inclusion of a module player. So, when the screen blanks, the module is loaded and plays.

There are loads of blankers, and the aquarium is really snazzy. Each blanker has a couple of options, including whether you want a module to be attached (there are three modules supplied, but you can use any Protracker module). You can set the time delay before blanking the screen (and the mouse pointer).

Midnight is one of the best and most versatile blankers, but the $15 registration fee might be a little too high to get the response that the program deserves.

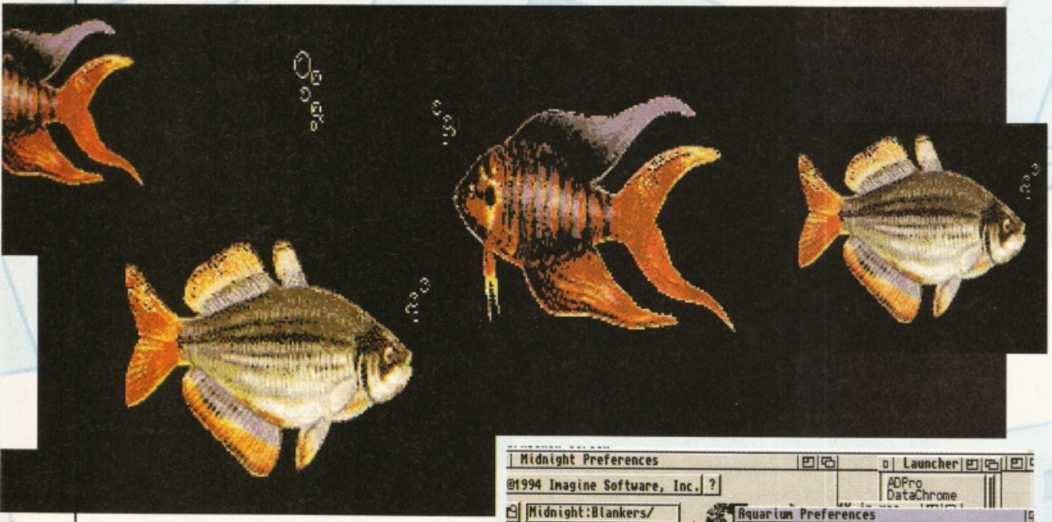
Verdict: 90% **Star buy**

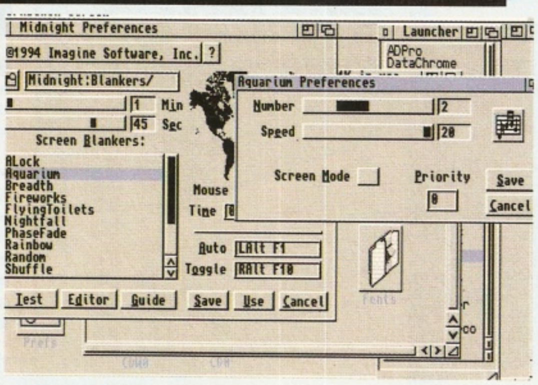
Spelling School

This is an educational title designed to help youngsters improve their spelling. The program sets itself out with a school-like front-end. You have to enroll with the secretary, who looks stupid and then choose the level you want to work at. The teacher introduced himself to me as "Sir" and looked as silly as the secretary. It might seem niggling and beside the point, but children will find it a bit lame, which isn't going to encourage them to use the program.

A more fundamental problem is that the program uses the innate speech capabilities of the Amiga, i.e. narrator-driven voices. I had more problems working out what the "teacher" said than I did spelling it. Luckily, you can repeat a word, but even so, the limitations placed on the program by the abilities of the Amiga's speech hamper the overall success of Spelling School. I'd give it a B-, could do better.

Verdict: 65%





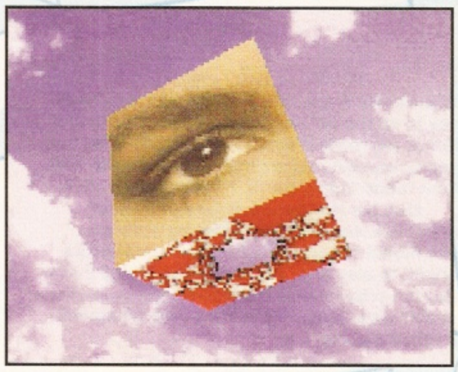
Midnight offers a large number of different screen blankers and has sub-options, such as music to be attached. It is accessed through a simple GUI preferences program.

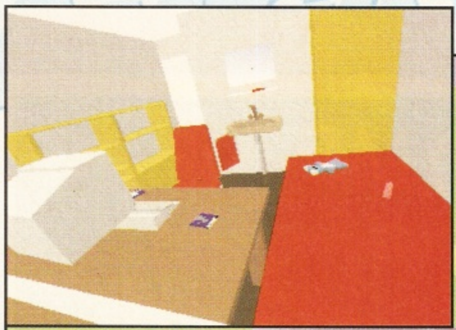
Navigator 2

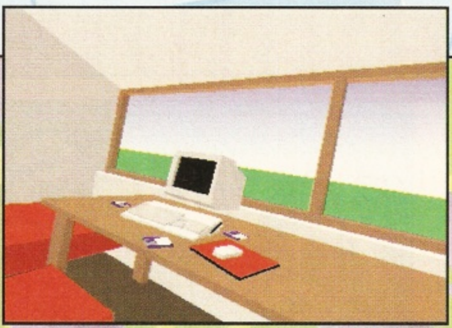
I am about to get really excited about a program, so if you find this sort of gushing praise embarrassing then skip to the next review. Hands up if you remember the original Navigator. Well, it wasn't all that long ago, but I always felt that it didn't receive all the coverage it deserved. Hopefully, this version will do better.

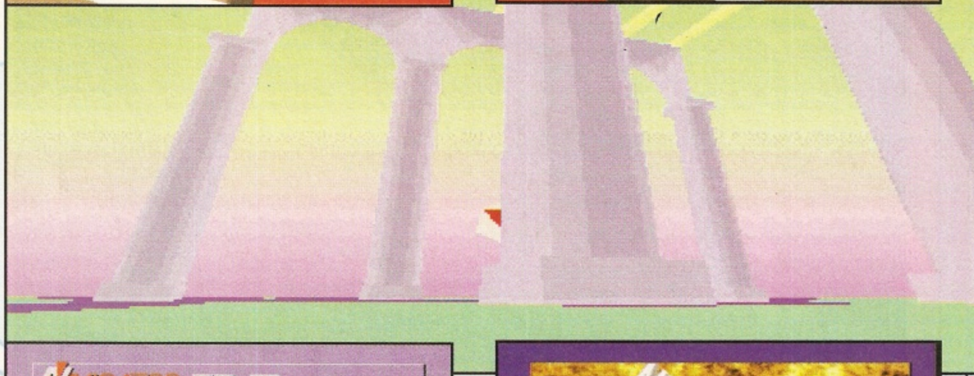
Navigator allows you to wander around a 3D landscape in any dimension using the mouse. The whole landscape is generated in real-time (which is why you need a 68020 minimum [I'd say and A1200 at least, because you really want the AGA chipset]). It is very smooth and you can spend hours looking

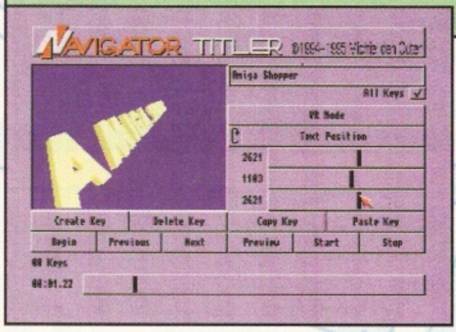
Navigator is the must-buy of the month. Although it runs fine on an A1200, owners of accelerated Amigas will find it even better. The package consists of the second version of Navigator, a program that allows you to wander around 3D worlds in real-time, and two fully usable titling program demos. Suddenly you can easily spin and move 3D text and IFF images. I loved it so much, my head fell off.













around the numerous "worlds" that come with the program. There are two versions included, for PAL and NTSC machines.

This version of Navigator can use pre-defined scripts when you run it from the CLI (although you can use the main program directly from Workbench), so that it loads the world and flies you around it by itself.

Now, I've got to say, I would have awarded this program a Star buy by itself, but the package comes on two disks and the second extras disk contains another two programs (one of which is archived to fit it on). These two programs are a fully usable demo of a 3D titler, which prints "Demo Version" in the background to encourage you to register.

You can enter the text that you want to appear on the screen and then set "keys". Each key shows where you want the text to be at that point in time during playback, defining position and rotation. The program then calculates the smoothest way to move the text between the points and off you go.

The other program, NWiper, does much the same as the titler except it works with IFF images over the text.

This is an absolute must for A1200 owners. It has a program that shows you what is possible and also offers you practical uses. The titling software is ideal for amateurs and novices. I deducted one point because the default tool on the icon was wrong (in honesty, I've had to really struggle to find a gripe at all – that's the worst I could do).

Verdict: 99% **Star buy**

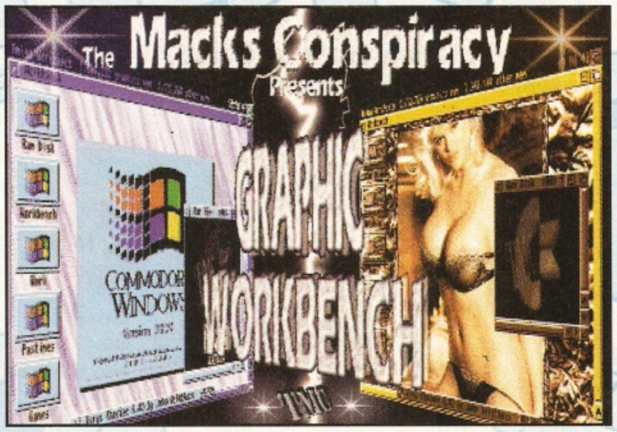
Graphic Workbench

Collections of backdrops are all well and good, but they can be fiddly to install and a bit of a pain to test out. This two-disk pack takes a lot of pain out of the process, but it still has a few annoying quirks. There are several backdrops and icons to use, which install themselves using the standard Installer. Your original versions are moved and stored and a de-installer script and icon are added, so removing the new versions is easy.

The problems arise because several criteria have to be met before the Installer will work, e.g. sufficient room on your hard drive (this collection is for hard drive users only). Normally, this wouldn't matter, but every time you load this Installer, you have to sit through an intro, which becomes a real bore the sixth time round. It is also a good job that I like the new icon system it has installed, because the de-installer didn't seem to remove it.

The problems are worth setting aside though, because the new Workbenchs are fun and colourful and this is the most painless way of installing them that I've come across. Oh, and you get quite a selection packed on to just two disks.

Graphic Workbench is an easy to install set of Workbench backdrops and icons. There are plenty of different topics to choose from and it also comes with de-installer scripts.



Verdict: 84%

Tee To Green v14

Version 14? There are programs that develop and grow and become so complex that they go through many incarnations. This isn't one. Version 14 suggests that 1-13 were seriously bugged. Still, this version seems stable enough, so what does it do?

Tee To Green is designed to let you enter in the details of your golf course, such as the length and par. Then you can keep putting (geddit, 'putting') your scores in after each round. It's a specialised database really. It

▶ 78

Internet Select ;-)



I have decided to take a different tack this month. After Amiga Format put Real 3D on their Coverdisks (November 1995), I started to rekindle my interest in the program, but being the artistic reject that I am, I found that I had to rely on other people's models to play with.

Scouring the Internet, I have found some scenes that are pretty neat and I thought I would let you in on the secret too, so that you can also make better use of what was a superb giveaway.

20's Rocket Ship

This object is one of the rocket ships that you see in all the old sci-fi series. Being a bit of a fan of the repeats when I was a child (yes, I am young enough not to remember them the first time round [smug grin]), I had to take a look.

Like the first two, you load this as an animation scene before messing around. The model is quite simple, but it's still a nice object to play with and it does look very much like the original models. If you want to render a poster-type thing, this is the ticket. (Requires Real 3D version 1 +)

Source: Aminet/pix/real3
Archive: dandare.lha

Verdict: 85%

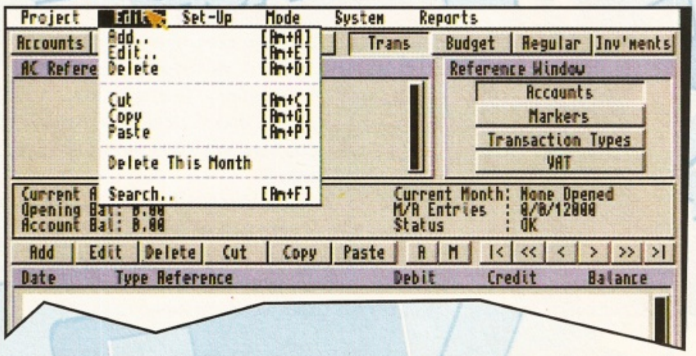
does the job, but leaves quite a bit to be desired aesthetically (i.e. it looks a bit crap). Functional, but not awe-inspiring.

Verdict: 70%

Ultra Accounts & FinAcc

The lead program on this disk, Ultra Accounts, was included on our Coverdisk back on issue 52, so I'm not going to dwell on it here. It's a very good accounts package (still) and worth investigating if you don't have that copy of Amiga Shopper.

However, there is a second program on here which is equally interesting. Called FinAcc, it is an AMOS program, which is off-putting to start with because of the stigma that bad programming in AMOS has caused. In fact, this program is one of the ones that shows what can really be done with AMOS. It has a professional-looking interface and requesters and has a lot of features that allow you to enter quite detailed accounts. As such, it could feasibly be used for a little more than just your standard home accounts. It even allows for different VAT codes.



FinAcc is the second program on the Ultra Accounts disk, but doesn't play second fiddle to it.

The program is not 100 per cent intuitive to use, so you have to either play for a bit or, shock horror, read the manual.

Two top programs that are ideal as starters for sorting out your money matters. You may already have one, which might detract a little, but if not, this is a disk to be ordered.

Verdict: 90% Star buy

Lyapunov II

Fractals, love or hate 'em? Well, if you are one of the former, then here's a program for you. It's not new, but I've not seen it before. It's not as complex as Fractal Universe (AS57), but it's instantly assessable and allows you to work on the same screen as the fractal. There are lots of different types of fractals supplied and also a set of example pictures for you to take a look at. Lyapunov II is very easy to use and can be fun, but I've got to conclude that Fractal Universe, albeit slower because of its complexity, is the better of the two. You also get a bonus of a Minesweeper clone game on this disk.

Verdict: 78%

CLI Zone 1995/1

This is a strange release. On the one hand, it is powerpacked to gain maximum space and contains around 60 CLI utilities. As such, it's got a lot going for it. Many of the CLI commands have been included on Coverdisks, but that doesn't necessarily detract from the worth of a collection. What does though is the fact that some of the programs are versions from years ago. I have no idea where they dug up their version of SnoopDOS for example.

If you are a Shell user, then you may already have many of the more useful commands. If you are only just getting to grips with the CLI, then this has some of the useful small additions.

I get the feeling that some of the best CLI commands, which may be larger in size, have been forsaken in order to get a bigger number of programs packed on. And I'm not sure that was for the best. Quality above quantity and only the two together if you can manage it.

All in all, it's an adequate compilation and I wouldn't want to deter the appearance of a second volume.

Verdict: 70%

Virus Workshop 5.5

After last month's feature on viruses, I was glad to see yet another updated virus program. This time Virus Workshop has been improved to such a standard that it is unmissable. It can now check any device, all files; it will check the memory vectors and can also check LHA and LZX archives.

Right, there are a couple of little points. First, read the manual. This is a must. I didn't

Monk

There's not that many LightWave objects available on Aminet and I have to struggle to find interesting ones for the Coverdisks. It might be that Imagine is just the most popular program for 3D on the Amiga amongst the hobbyists and therefore other programs don't get much of a look-in. Monk struck me at first as a rather odd top half of some sort of oriental monk). Then I realised it was upside down! It's actually a cowled monk and as such is a little mundane, because it's a hooded figure. Still, it's not at all bad. If you fancy playing around with a humanoid object, it is a complex one and worth investigating. (Requires LightWave)

Source: Aminet/gfx/3dobj/
Archive: monk.lha

Verdict: 80%

Car

This second scene is included on the Coverdisks this month as well. When I took a look, I was bemused as to why the object has been supplied as a scene, and that there is no background. Oh well. It's not as good as the room, but the car is a lovely model (in all senses) and despite a section that doesn't quite fit properly, it's still a good object to play around with. (Requires Real 3D version 1 +)

Source: Aminet/gfx/3dobj/
Archive: d1car.lha

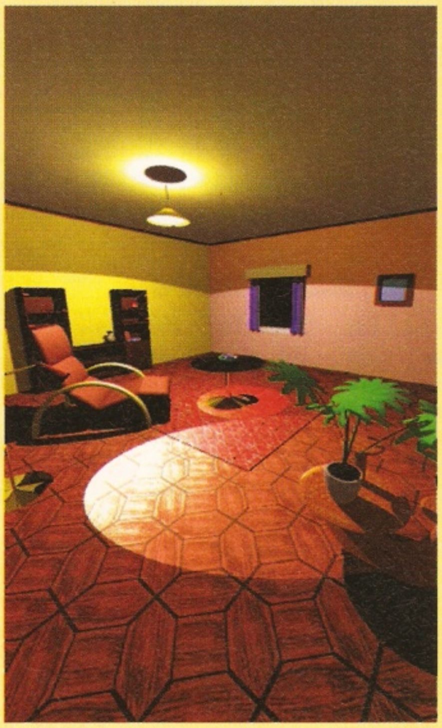
Verdict: 90% Star buy

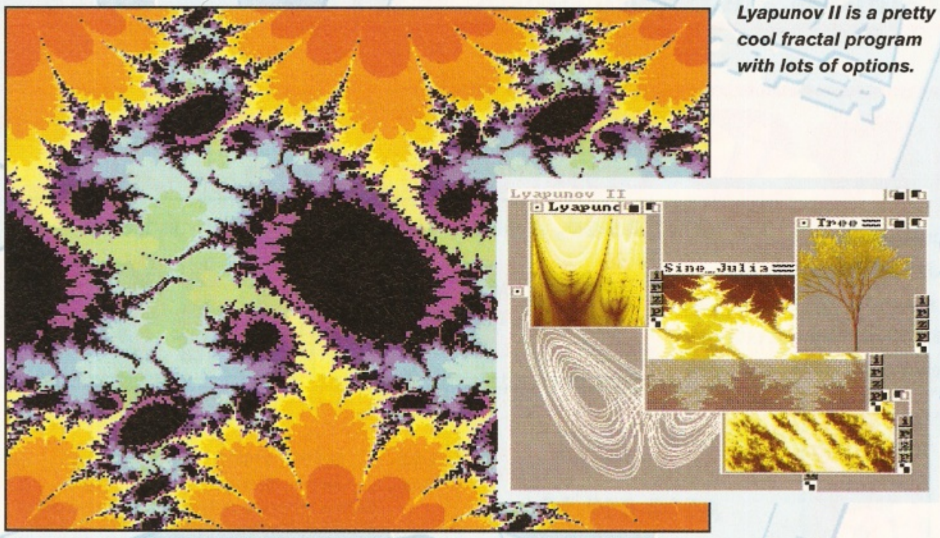
Room

This was one of the first scenes that I found and it is definitely one of the best. It is a full room, complete with furniture and carpets and even a plant. It takes some time to render at any quality, but even rendering the scene exactly as it is given to you is satisfying. Because you load the scene, you do have to redirect the program so that it can find the correct textures, but as these are supplied, it's easy enough. This scene proves just how impressive the results can be from what is quite an old program. Lovely. And, you'll be pleased to hear, thanks to co-inciding deadlines, there was time to get this scene on to this month's Coverdisks – you can find it in the 3D Zone. (Requires Real 3D version 1 +)

Source: Aminet/gfx/3dobj/
Archive: d2room.lha

Verdict: 95% Star buy





Lyapunov II is a pretty cool fractal program with lots of options.

and I ended up wiping my Virus Workshop disk with the program. This was entirely my fault (although I think a warning by the program itsself that it was going to do this would have been appreciated).

When the program checks an archive, it requires a temporary directory. I mistakenly thought it was looking for some files and assigned the directory to the program disk and thus it got wiped.

Another gripe is that if you check the Virus Workshop disk itself with the program, it doesn't recognise the bootblock. The disk isn't installed, or at least that's what AmigaDOS thinks and Virus Checker didn't notice anything odd about the bootblock.

The Virus Workshop has become so large now that it has been powerpacked in order to fit it all on.

If you are really serious about your data, then every tool you have that can protect it from damage is a must-buy. Virus Workshop 5.5 is one such must. But remember to read the instructions first!

Verdict: 95% Star buy

Iconographics

Excellent, excellent, excellent. Blimey, there are times when you wonder just how much good stuff can possibly appear in one month. Take this selection for example. It's a collection of new icons supplied in one large archive (trying to fit them on to floppies not archived would take up masses of disks because there are over 300 icons).

The disk is well compiled so that is easy to de-archive the program.

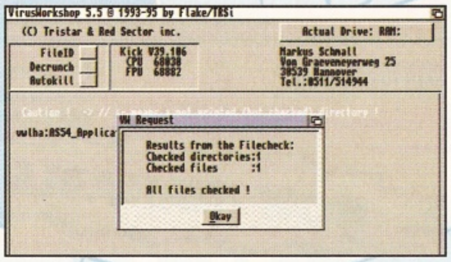
Then when you get there, on top of the full and easy to understand documentation, you find that there is an excellent Installer that takes all the pain out of installing the new icons. Not only does it replace the icons, it retains the specifications of the original icons, like tooltypes and screen position.

In addition, it goes through each replacement and shows you the old icon next to the new one to check that you want to install it (or you can say "sod it" and make it do the whole lot). In addition, this program is Freeware and there is a construction kit IFF that includes many of the elements used in the icons supplied so that you can easily create your own new icons.

Now, normally, I tend to get a bit bored with these sort of packages. I mean, OK, the standard icons are pretty dull, but they do their job and so why bother playing around? This system though is easy to install and so colourful that I can recommend it with glee.

Verdict: 96% Star buy

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Virus Workshop 5.5 is excellent. Get it now! But read the documentation and back up the disk before you start.

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Printer Ribbons

BLACK	1 off	2+	5+	10+
Amstrad DMP2000/3000	2·80	2·65	2·45	2·25
Amstrad DMP4000	3·66	3·51	3·31	3·11
Amstrad PCW8256/LQ3500 Fab	2·85	2·70	2·50	2·30
Amstrad PCW9512 M/Strike	2·60	2·45	2·25	2·05
Brother M1009/1024/1109/1209	3·90	3·75	3·55	3·35
Citizen 120D/LSP10/Swift 24/9	2·85	2·70	2·50	2·30
Commodore MPS1220/1230	4·50	4·35	4·15	3·95
Epson LQ100	4·10	3·95	3·75	3·55
Epson LQ200/400/500/800/850	3·45	3·30	3·10	2·90
Epson FX/MX/RX80/FX/LX800	2·90	2·75	2·55	2·35
Epson LX80/86/90	2·12	1·97	1·77	1·67
Mannesmann Tally 80/81	3·90	3·75	3·55	3·35
NEC Pinwriter P2200/P2+	3·03	2·88	2·68	2·48
Oki ML182/183/192/193/195	3·17	3·02	2·82	2·62
Panasonic KXP1123/1124/1140	3·46	3·31	3·11	2·91

BLACK	1 off	2+	5+	10+
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Star LC10/20/100	2·29	2·14	1·94	1·84
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Star LC24 – 10/20/200	2·86	2·71	2·51	2·31
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Star LC200	9·78	9·63	9·43	9·03
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Star LC240C, LC24-30	9·20	9·05	8·85	8·45

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What to ware?

The Public Domain is a confusing and actually incorrect term for a whole host of different types of ways of releasing programs. Here's a brief guide to the types.

PUBLIC DOMAIN: This software is free. You can do anything with it. Anything at all. Rename it, disassemble it, incorporate it into new programs, write updates, throw it out. Some people like to then put a note saying "This is Public Domain, but..." Unfortunately, there are no buts. If you label a program PD, that's what it is. People may break your moral rights if they do something you've asked them not to, but you're stuck with it.

SHAREWARE: Perhaps the most common type of release. Programmers take a great deal of time over some programs and therefore ask for a little something in return.

The Shareware releases tend to be the larger programs and fees range from £5 to about £20. This might sound like quite a bit of cash, but with programs of quality like ImageStudio, Text Engine 5, EdWordPro 5 and Freeform, you are getting a program that can offer many of the trimmings of a commercial program for a fraction of the price.

Many Shareware releases have a few limitations built in, such as the Save option disabled. These are removed in the full version which is available by registering. Registering often takes the form of a keyfile, which is a personal file that the program will recognise and allow access to all the options.

The advantage of keyfiles is that they can be sent to you by E-mail – so if you send off the registration fee (even abroad), you could get the full version within a few days. Unfortunately, programmers can't expect to make that much from Shareware fees because few people are prepared to send them the money.

FREEWARE: This is a common way of avoiding the lack of control PD has. Freeware is generally used to ensure the program is not modified or sold for profit by the unscrupulous – there is normally a top amount that can be charged for a disk containing the program. The program is still free and uncrippled, but it is protected from abuse.

POSTCARDWARE/E-MAILWARE: Many authors simply want to know how their program is faring, how many people are using it, whether it has any bugs, or if there are any suggestions for future versions. They therefore ask users to send some form of mail to them, telling them what they think.

Despite the fact this only costs the price of a stamp, far too few people actually bother to register. This is foolish for two reasons. Firstly, if you like the program, you probably do want to see it continue and programmers tend to abandon projects if they don't think people are interested. Secondly, if the program is good and the programmer gets a positive response, they are far more likely to support the Amiga with further programs.

LICENCEWARE: A scheme for programmers to effectively get fees for programs without the hassle of collecting registrations. These programs can only be sold by official distributors, and like full-price commercial programs, must not be passed on to friends. Currently, there are three Licenceware companies, F1, 5D and Horizon. This trend is growing though and individual PD libraries, like Shoah PD, as well as individual authors, like Ali Prior, are selling their own brands of Licenceware. There are more details of each in the PD Directory on our Coverdisks and in the interview with F1 Licenceware in AS57. Licenceware has several advantages. Authors don't have to worry about anything and users get a cheaper product, because it generates more revenue.

GIFTWARE: These programs may or may not be the full version. Either way, the author asks you to register, by sending them some form of gift. Some ask for specific gifts, like CDs, while others just ask you to send them anything you can think of.

???-WARE: There are then all the different types of ware, such as Beetware (send the user a fresh beet). These are largely quite jokey, like the one that demands that you try and make as much money from the program as possible and may not pass it on for free! On the whole, the authors would probably settle for a communication of some kind.

Speed 8

Speed 8 is another collection of packed demos, this time taken from the entries at the "Intel Outside" party. There are quite a few 64K demos and some very good 4K ones even. Best of all, there has been a real effort to produce intros that don't require the AGA chipset or a fast processor so that they run fine on an A500+ or A600.

The front menu is really well presented and fits perfectly with the amusing tune that plays (I'm not saying any more, you'll have to take a look, or listen, yourself).

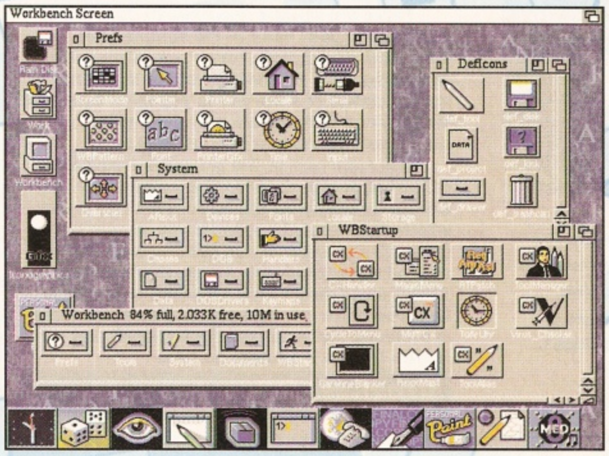
I had one of the intros guru the computer, but that was on an A1200. In addition there are three chiptunes with the program, although my real favourite was the tune that it boots up playing.

Verdict: 90% **Star buy**





Speed 8 offers some excellent demos packed on to one disk, has a cool front-end and boots with amusing music.



Iconographics is a fabulous set of replacement icons that come packed down to save space, together with a sensible installation system that uses a customised icon installer.

Phreaking Only 5

This is a disk magazine which is dedicated to the dubious – well downright illegal actually – pastime of phreaking.

Phreaking is a joyous hobby involving the illegal use of computers and electronics in an attempt to deceive the telecommunications companies by tampering with their telephone systems.

The articles are largely concerned with Stateside happenings and make an interesting read. In case you're wondering, Phreaking Only doesn't actually give you any information on how to phreak. It does, however, detail the arrests of several people who have – although whether those details are accurate is impossible to tell.

There is also a section concerning PGP signatures and how effective they are, which is interesting. There's also a great deal of jargon and slang and the minimalist front-end confirms that this is a diskmag for tech heads. There's some interesting stuff on here, but it's a bit sparse, generally.

Verdict: 73%

▶ 82

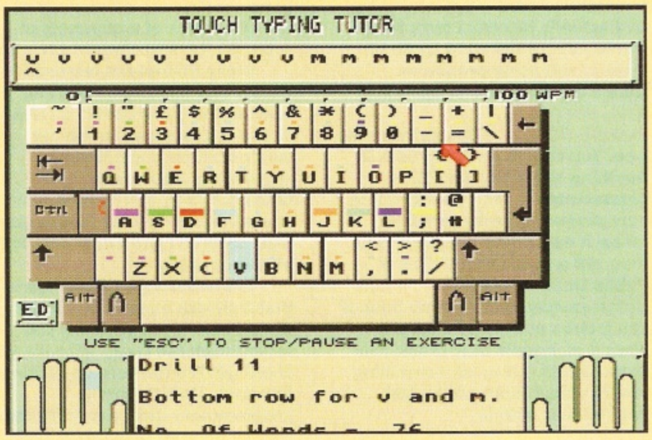
Licenceware

Whilst the great Tomato Soup debate rages on across the office in Amiga Format, we forego the expression of our opinion to bring you the reviews of the latest Licenceware titles. Is there nothing we won't do for you? Well, it depends on the price actually.

MidiCraft Samples 8

This disk simply contains 38 sound samples in standard Amiga format. They are all "classic synth instruments and sound effects". They are also of a high quality, which explains their size. The price is not that much more than many PD disks, so if you are looking for these types of samples, it's not exactly costing that much. Still, it's not the most inspired release ever.

Verdict: 80%



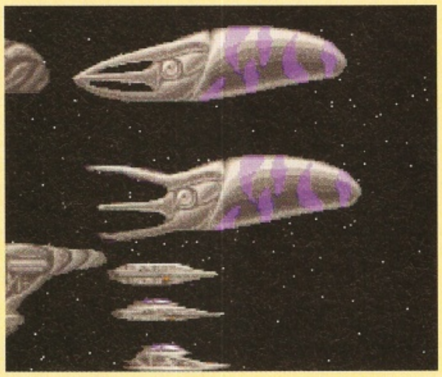
Right: Touch Typing Tutor could teach you a useful skill for the small cost of Licenceware.

Below: Some of the pictures supplied on Nothing But AMOS 8 for you to use in your own programs.

Nothing but AMOS 8

This is the "long-awaited" release of the diskmag for AMOS coders. It contains articles, graphics, music and samples for use in your own AMOS creations. The articles are almost non-existent and there are only three graphics (which are quite good), two modules (hum) and loads of samples, which are at least ideal for games. In addition, there is a code directory for you to look at. There is code for games and a lottery predictor. It's not bad really. The presentation is clean, unlike some diskmags and it's easy to find what you're interested in. It might not seem to have masses on it, but at least what is there is good.

Verdict: 80%



Kids Only

Apparently, this package was originally intended for commercial release, which I think might have stretched it a little bit, but only just. It is a collection of seven small games for children to play. Like the Magic Paint Box that won so much praise, the secret to this program's success is the simplicity of the idea executed in such a way that it keeps kids of all ages playing.

The dot to dot game for example isn't too picky and it understands which dot you mean when you click near one. When you complete the picture, a tune plays and the numbers disappear leaving you with a compete picture to colour in. There are several levels too, so you can choose how many dots you want.

The other games are: Colouring Pad, I-Spy, Music Maker, Word Search and Pairs.

In fact that idea is carried through to all the games, so you can have simple or complex picture slides for example. What can I say? It might not be as fully creative as Magic Paint Box, but it will keep the little ones entertained on the rainy days. A great purchase for small children (or immature adults).

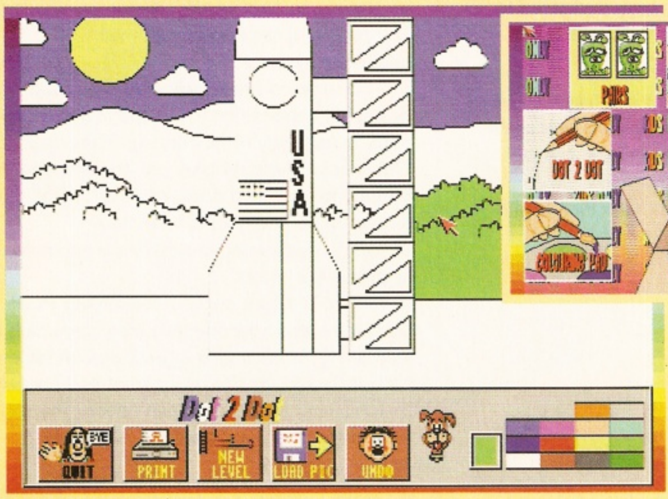
Verdict: 90% Star buy

MidiCraft Mag 8

The diskmag for Amiga musicians, or so it claims. This is a mag compiled by the Amiga musicians featured in AS53 and even contains some of the advice that they supplied then. The editorial is interesting and diverse. There are tutorials for beginners and some finished modules. The disk also contains some music-related utilities.

Although the front-end to the mag is easy to use and I would recommend this, especially at the price, to all musicians who want to feel a bit more part of a group or want some tutorials even, but why did they use "muchmore" as the text reader? Scrolling articles are a pain in the neck. Do us a favour, change the text viewer.

Verdict: 90% Star buy





Kids Only offers seven games to keep "them" occupied while you do more important "things".

AMOS AGA Extension

You might have seen a rather extensive advertising campaign for this program by AmigaNuts PD. Sadly they are no more, but F1 has now released the title £6 cheaper than was originally intended. It is not a complete set of commands because they are still under development, but there are 22 on offer so far, from AGA Screen Open and AGA Draw Mode to AGA Unpack and AGA Text.

There are full documents for each command and some example AMOS programs, and an installer. OK, it would be nice if this was a completed extension, but the only way it will continue to grow is with support, so I can understand the premature release. You're paying under 20p per command. Decide for yourself whether you think it's worth it.

Verdict: N/A

Touch Typing Tutor

Learning to type "properly" is a real pain, but it's increasingly a necessary employment skill (unless you're a journalist). However, there are only a few typing tutors available and this Licenceware one has a lot to commend it.

There are various exercises to do and you can then try your hand at the sample texts. There are also options for exercises on specific letters that you are having trouble with. The screen shows you the words you must type and an on-going interpretation of the number of words per minute that you are managing.

The main part of the screen is a rendition of the keyboard, showing you which letter you should be typing. At the bottom are two hands, which show you which finger you should be using for the letter. If you get it wrong, the computer beeps at you. Although it's written in AMOS and doesn't look amazing, this tutor is well worth the money. I always find the trouble is breaking my two-finger typing habit, but maybe I'll give it another go now.

Verdict: 90% Star buy

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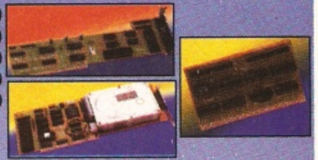
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Talking shop

This month in Talking Shop: What you think Amiga Technologies are doing and the winner of our Taxan monitor is revealed.

The New Year will bring new users to the Amiga now that the machines are back on sale – and selling out faster than they are ordered! It will also bring new readers to Amiga Shopper. And we want to hear from those new readers, as well as all our loyal followers. So, please write in and join in any of the debates going on in these pages, or tell us what you would like to see featured in Amiga Shopper.

End of the line?

£25 Winner

It seems that the whole Amiga community has been stricken by a death-wish now that the Amiga has been snatched back from a terminal slide into obscurity, obsolescence and ridicule by Escom. The universal talking down of the value of the relaunched A1200 packs could easily undermine the confidence of a timid re-entry market and in my view is unjustified and dangerous.

Undoubtedly, the price of a product is a factor when individuals make a choice in a free market, but to select too low a price, thereby undervaluing a product, can have as immensely negative effect as overpricing a product. The cost of a product has a major influence on the way in which consumers will view the quality of the product and therefore its desirability. In other words, too low a price indicates an obsolete, end-of-line product that has low value and desirability.

To make a profit with this type of product the manufacturer needs to sell large volumes of the product, i.e. "stack 'em high and sell 'em cheap". Do Amiga owners see their Amigas as low value, end-of-line products? I think not, and if the Amiga community is to survive then the Amiga must head for a niche market targeted at the strengths of the platform such as low-entry price for high functionality, ease of use, superb graphics, vast range of excellent PD software, expandability, ease of entry into programming; and general desirability and high cognoscenti status compared with competitors (what can you do with £600 entry-level PCs – use them as bookends, perhaps?).

The niche market for the A4000 is naturally different and Escom acknowledge this. The fact that Escom are not advertising at present makes it essential for us in the Amiga community to ensure that the word of mouth advertising we provide is not overly negative, especially as word of mouth can and does sell products, or destroy them. So be positive and anticipate a sell out of the present stocks of A1200s as this is the guarantee of the future of the Amiga.



The Amiga Magic bundle can be found in Escom shops, Tandy and other High Street stores!

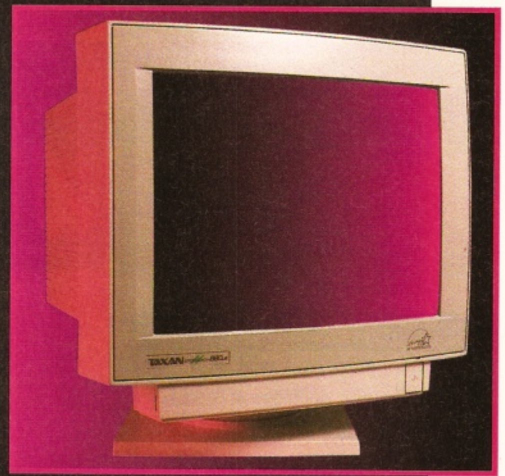
The new HD A1200 pack contains more and better software than my Desktop Dynamite pack two years ago with no price increase, but a large HD – 170Mb, compared with the 64Mb originally in my computer. In other words, it is a better value entry-pack primarily targeted at consumers looking for easy access to productivity software.

It is obvious that the PC market is now at saturation point as manufacturers are unable to keep PC prices up without an ever more rapid race to fit bigger and faster processors to allow memory hungry over-elaborate software to function, or else sell basic PCs at knock-down prices. The PC market has already entered the pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap phase and it is to Escom's credit that they have seen the niche opportunity afforded by Amiga and the Commodore brands and have saved our favourite system from obscurity for this year.

Duncan Neithercut
Heswall, Wirral

I agree that it may have undervalued the machine if Amiga Technologies had re-launched the Amiga cheaper than they did. I think the main problem most people have is that the technology hasn't moved on from four years ago, whereas there have been major advances on other platforms. We know that the Amiga is an excellent multimedia machine and is

Taxan monitor winner!



We ran a competition in our December issue to win the Taxan 880lr monitor (pictured above), which we awarded a Star buy in our Supertest the month before. Well, we received sackloads of entries but unfortunately, we only had one monitor to give away. And the lucky winner is...

Mr. P. Korab from Accrington in Lancashire.

Congratulations, Mr. Korab! There will be a rather large parcel arriving on your doorstep very soon.

Subjects of interest

In our news pages last month, we asked you to write to Petro Tyschtschenko at Amiga Technologies to tell him what you want from your machine. But we also want you to write in and let us know too.

We want you to tell us what you think of Amiga Technologies, the Amiga Magic pack and the software bundled with it.

We also want you to tell us what you would like to see featured in Amiga Shopper. If there is any Amiga software or hardware that we haven't covered in the magazine, but that you would like us to review, then let us know! And if there are any tutorials or features you would like to read – tell us!

It is only when we get lots of feedback from you that we know that we are covering what you want to read.

You can contact us by E-mail or snail mail at the address in the box opposite.

For those of you who missed Petro's address, here it is again:

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Fax: +49 6252 709 520
E-mail: gbo@amiga-tech.de

unrivalled as a serious home computer, but I think a lot of people were hoping for a completely new, redesigned Amiga.

By the way, Escom are starting to advertise the new machines – if only in the Amiga press for now. Amiga Shopper first carried an advert for Escom in our Christmas 1995 mag and you'll find another one in this issue. Amiga Technologies are also organising the World Of Amiga Show – see our news pages in this issue for the latest information on the dates and location of the show.

Eastern promise

I am reader/subscriber of AS since issue 1, I enjoy reading AS because it is the only serious Amiga mag for mature Amiga users and the recent enchancements were excellent. Here are some suggestions:

a) 2D graphic/image-processing and FX: I'm fan of Joel Hagen, the graphic guru on Amiga World, but Amiga World is no longer in circulation, we miss his column Accent On Graphics, I would like AS to have a similar monthly column by JH, so that Amiga users can learn tips/techniques and tricks for creating imaginative Amiga graphics.

b) 3D modelling/animation: It's good to see the 3D tutorials back, I am a Imagine user thanks to an Amiga Format Coverdisk, I have since upgraded to Version 3.3. Amiga Format have run a great series of Imagine tutorials, then PC Format – which ends in July 95 issue. Imagine users are suckers for tips/techniques/cool effects. Can we have a series on Imagine in AS, please? Possibly sourced from the Internet. I've seen some great tips on this Website: http://www.websharx.com:80/~kinda/tips/newtips.html

c) Amiga graphic books: Would it be possible to compile all the graphic/3D-related tutorials that appear in Amiga magazines (including stuff like


Mojo divulges the secrets of the Babylon 5 bright, blue nebulas – see page 60.

Accent On Graphics) into one handbook, so that you don't need to search through stacks of magazines to look for the tips you want?

d) Amiga hardware/software developers: To have articles on them, interview/present products/products under development etc...

Henry Chong Chung Wai
Malaysia, E-mail

You'll be pleased to hear that Babylon 5 creator Mojo from Foundation Imaging is back with his 3D tutorial on page 60. This month he explains how they make the Babylon 5 nebulas look so good.

Bruce Smith Books may have some Amiga graphics books, give them a call on ☎ 01923 894355. I will certainly pass your graphic book idea on to our books department, but it would be a much better idea to start a project like that from scratch – to make sure all aspects of Amiga graphics were covered.

As for Amiga software and hardware developers, we are planning to have an interview with industry figures or companies in every issue from now on – turn to page 75 to find out what ex-Commodore MD David Pleasance is doing now!

PC hassle

What a laugh I had yesterday (8/11/95). A friend of mine phoned me up and asked if I wanted to see his demo of Calligari's TrueSpace on his PC P75. OK, I says. Then he mentioned that he couldn't use his copy of Imagine, because the mouse didn't work when he ran it under windoze.

Look of puzzlement on my face.

I said, 'How do you mean?'

He explained that he needed a mouse driver for his IBM mouse, in order for it to run. He said that Imagine has to be run from DOS and not from Windoze, because that's the type of application it is. He tried to launch it from DOS but no joy. Look of puzzlement on my face.

OK, I says. But this got me thinking. I come from a programming background and as a result, if I'm posed with a problem, my instincts are to try and solve it. I'm by no means a PC aficionado or lover of, but on hearing this I delved into my Windoze and MS-DOS users guide (pretty well written) to find a solution.

It gave me a possible solution to the problem and opened my eyes to the waste (both financial and chronological), that the OS presents the user. I can appreciate that Piece Seize want to make their systems as open as possible, but damn, what a bloody waste of time a lot of it is. Imagine, a program that cannot be used under a WIMPS environment with a mouse, but can under DOS, *if* you have the appropriate driver for the various devices.

For me this is too much hassle. I enjoy solving problems, yes, but not when I have something to do and to cap it off the possible solution didn't work. Which for me was a bit upsetting because I use Imagine on my Amiga and wanted to use it on a P75 to see how fast it was.

My friend is an ex-Amiga user, who was lured to the other side by Doomalitis on a 486. But then he's someone who plays a lot of games, which speaks for itself. He is very power hungry, fast chip, fast CD-ROM drive, fast graphics board, etc, but no thought on efficiency in program and engineering design. He and I always have debates about Amiga vs PC and it saddens me to think that he cannot see anything positive about the Amiga. He just played too many games I suppose. In his eyes the PC is second to none. Shame he can't use any program for his machine he wants though.

God bless the Amiga. PC parts may be cheaper but you get what you pay for.

Paul Sheran
E-mail

Well, as I said before the Amiga is still unrivalled as a serious home computer. It's a shame your pal spent all that money just to play games on his PC. Maybe he should have invested in a PlayStation instead!

How to contact us

£25 Winner

Write in to Talking Shop and you could win yourself some cash. The Star letter of the month receives £25.

So, put pen to paper and send your letters in to:

Talking Shop, Amiga Shopper, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Alternatively, E-mail your letters to:
amshopper@cix.compulink.co.uk
sgrant@futurenet.co.uk

All the letters received at these addresses will be considered for publication, unless you specifically advise us otherwise.

Riscy business

I would really like to see a series of articles on object-oriented programming on the Amiga, either using C++ or one of the other object oriented languages available on the Amiga, e.g. Amiga E or Oberon.

Thank you very much for printing a letter of mine earlier in the year, just after Escom's purchase of the Amiga and all its wrappings, which stated my concern over a PC manufacturer buying our beloved computer. You put me in my place and now I can see – rightly so. I was concerned that Escom had not stated any plans for the Amiga and came in at the last minute and pinched it from under the noses of Commodore UK. Now I can see that AT has firm plans to develop the Amiga and with the announcement of the new RISC Amiga this is becoming an exciting market again. One last thing, will you be reviewing the new AT monitor?

Matt Sergeant
E-mail

We always welcome suggestions from readers and yours will be considered for future issues. Please keep your ideas flowing in – it helps us to know what you want to see featured in your favourite serious Amiga magazine!

The new Amiga Technologies monitor is reviewed in this very issue – turn to page 41.

Escom or not Escom?

Perhaps I am too late for your Christmas issue of Amiga Shopper but, reference December 1995 issue of AS, today I was informed by the Escom shop in Eastbourne, Sussex, contrary to your news item, that they *will* have Amigas in their shops in time for Christmas. Previously, they had been told they would have them during September 1995.

John J. Last
Pevensey Bay, East Sussex

Well, John, we report the facts as and when we are told them. When we were putting together the November issue Amiga Technologies assured us that Amigas would be sold through Escom shops, then when our December issue was going to press AT decided that they were not putting the machines in the Escom stores. However, as reported in our Christmas issue, A1200s are now available from Escom outlets nationwide! Which can only be a good thing.

A question of price?

Jonathan McBrien has a lot of good points in his letter (AS56). When the company that bought out the Amiga is selling a P75, 8Mb RAM and 850M HD for under £1,000, we have to ask why they are asking £400 for a four-year-old (technology-wise) Amiga. Are they just trying to make their money back, or get rid of unwanted parts before upgrading? Is this limited run of the old models a way of finding out how committed the Amiga market base is?

The price may be inflated to make back what they spent before taking the Amiga anywhere. If so (I hope), the prices will be a little more reasonable on any newer models. A sellout would also show Amiga Technologies how unwise it would be to abandon the Amiga, which may be an option Escom is still considering. The buyout was for the Commodore name, not for the technology.

I have an A1200 and am ecstatic at how easy it is to use. Will I buy the next generation when it hits the shops? If it's RISC, in a heartbeat. Otherwise, it depends on what has been changed/improved.

In the long run, the Amiga hasn't bit the dust unless we, its users, give up on it. Lack of variety (software) is said to be one of its downfalls. I hope a few of the programmers out there get the hint and stop programming mouse blankers, clocks and other assorted screen enhancements long enough to fill in a few of the gaps.

Andrew B. Hall

We have already reported that a RISC-based Amiga is on its way. In fact, Petro Tyschtschenko announced his commitment to the project to the world at the Video Toaster Expo held in Los Angeles recently. Turn to our news pages for more on Amiga developments. There are plenty of new programs being written by enthusiastic and talented programmers for the Amiga – you just have to look at our Public Domain section (and Coverdisks) to see that!

Pat on the back

Now that the Amiga is finally available again, complete with an excellent software bundle, wouldn't it be a welcome pat on the back and a good gesture of thanks from Escom and the software houses involved to make the bundled software available separately as a reward to the Amiga users who stuck it through the dark months when all around were losing their heads and jumping ship?

The software bundle represents some of the best Amiga software available, and would encourage users to move on to better things and make more serious use of their Amigas were Escom to release the bundle separately. If released at a price of around £30-£50 this package would represent a very good deal and be a suitable incentive to stick with the Amiga. Part of the reason for the Amiga's comatose period was the refusal of some A500 owners to upgrade from WB1.3 to an A1200 or newer system software.

I use my Amiga for productivity reasons, but can't always afford newer software: my current Amiga budget will be for an 030 and extra RAM. After all, I can't really make most use of my A1200 with only 2Mb, but with more power I can make use of the excellent applications available and will stick with the Amiga because it can do it. Escom's market is mainly in hardware, give the users a helping hand with the software, and more money can be spent on "officially licenced" upgrades, etc.

So Escom (and the rest), reward those loyal (and cliched) users and I'm sure that the Amiga can go from strength to strength.

David Marsh,
E-mail

It is not really worth releasing the pack software separately to the machines because Digita are releasing newer versions of all their software that's bundled with the Amiga Magic pack: Wordworth 4SE is a special version of the software produced exclusively for the pack, while Wordworth 5 is the latest version and includes many more new features. It will be available very soon; the new Organiser 2 is ready and is reviewed on page 44, while Datastore 2 and Money Matters 4 will be available soon too. In fact, we have a special time-limited version of the new Money Matters on our Coverdisk next month!

Surprise, surprise!

Initially, I couldn't believe my eyes when I found my name among the winners of the Aiwa competition. When the package arrived this morning I immediately installed everything and a few seconds later I couldn't believe my ears.



These Aiwa SC-C55 multimedia speakers were given away in our October competition.

What a sound!!!! It's indeed an excellent set of speakers and the sound is superb. It's a real pleasure. Thanks a lot Amiga Shopper.

Anne Weyens
Belgium, E-mail

You're welcome, Anne. We hope to run at least one competition in every issue of Amiga Shopper. The competition this month is to win the publishing program of your choice and it can be found on page 68. All you have to do is design a cover. The winner gets to choose between four of the best publishing programs on the Amiga, including the new Wordworth 5!

Blitz BASIC 2

I'm studying technical physics (civil engineer-education) at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg (Sweden). I'm really interested in buying Blitz BASIC 2 for my Amiga 500. Do you know where I can buy it and how much it costs?

Martin Johansson
E-mail

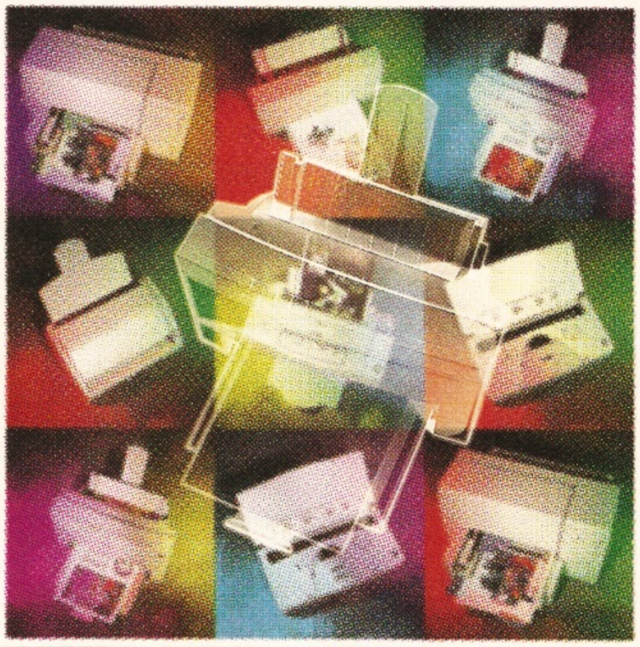
Try Guildhall Leisure on ☎ 01302 890000. (They have a new version of Blitz coming out soon called ABC (Acid Blitz Compiler). ■

Advertisers' index

The **essential** magazine for Amiga enthusiasts

AMIGA SHOPPER

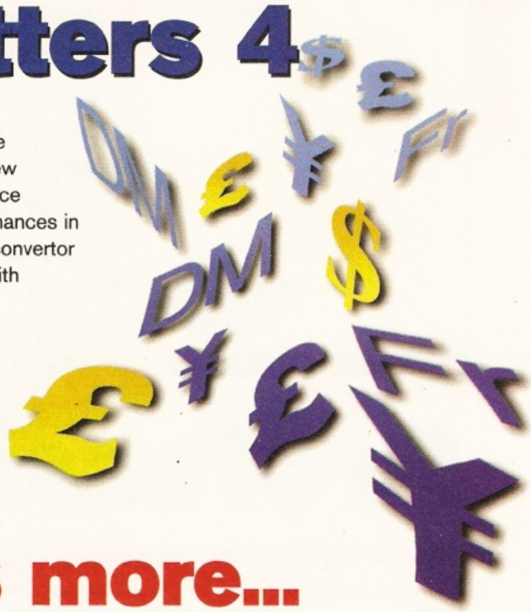
Next **month**



Perfect **print** part **2!**

There have been several important developments since we ran our printers Supertest in issue 51, for example the Canon BJC-600e which we thought so highly of has been superseded by a new, even higher quality colour printer. So, to keep you in tune with the printer world, we have another huge Supertest. This time we've included laser and dot matrix printers too. If you don't read this, you won't know what to buy!

Money **Matters 4**



We have a real treat for you next month. Digita have given us a time-limited, full version of their brand new release, Money Matters 4. Money Matters is a finance manager and is an excellent way of keeping your finances in order. This latest version now includes a currency convertor and a loan predictor and it can share information with Datastore, TurboCalc and Wordworth.

Amiga Shopper's Coverdisk version of Money Matters 4 will have a three-month lifespan, which should give you plenty of time to play about with it.

Plus, we have another batch of top-quality programs and utilities crammed on to the rest of our Coverdisks.

And there's more...

Imagine has long been the acknowledged king of 3D animation programs in the UK, but now it has a serious rival. Maxon Cinema 4D is the favourite 3D program in Germany and it has finally been produced for the UK market. We have a head-to-head review of the new version 4 of Imagine and Cinema 4D next month.

We have plenty of other reviews planned for our February issue too. Then there are our tutorials: 3D, AMOS, DTP and Comms. Plus we have the biggest and best Public Domain section ever. And if you're having problems with your Amiga, our experts are here to help in Amiga Answers. And that's not all!

February issue **59.** On sale Thursday, **11th January**

"If you print without it, you have only yourself to blame!"*
*Review in German "Amiga Plus" Magazine Dec 95

AMIGA-TEST very good TurboPrint Prof. 4.0 11.0 out of 12 OVERALL RATING SEPT 95

AMIGA SPEZIAL Turboprint prof. 4.0 Overall Rating: Very Good

AMIGA plus 12/95 Award '95

TURBOPRINT Professional 4.1

Our enhanced printer driver system has now got even better!

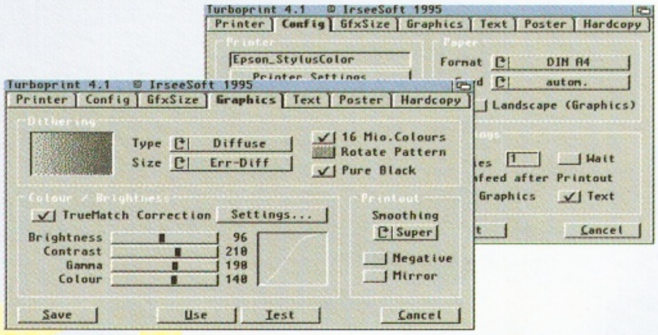
Outstanding: TurboPrint will not only output 24 bit-graphics directly from your floppy or hard drive in the highest quality possible, but will also print **from applications** like Personal Paint, Deluxe Paint or Brilliance with the **full colour palette** available with AGA-graphics chipset. Although utilising the standard Workbench printer interface, printout will **not** be limited to the usual 4096 colours.

Perfect printouts from day one:

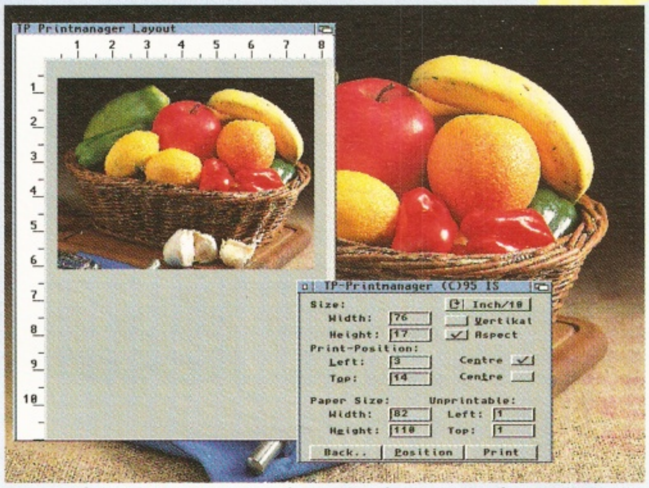
TurboPrint combines ease of use with **unparalleled output quality**. Simply choose your printer, and go: With our brand new **intelligent printer drivers** you'll get fantastic results straight away.

Matching colours: With the new high-speed **"True Match"** colour management system up to **16 million colours** are closely represented by the printout.

Various settings, like brightness, contrast, colours, and many more, allow for **individual configuration**.



The Preferences Menu with 7 "Index-Cards"



The Print Manager showing the Layout function

Improved Graphics Print Manager:

Our integrated multi-format print and display utility has been considerably improved. New functions include support for **JPEG,** BMP, IFF DEEP ILBM, and many more.

Any picture up to 16 million colours may be displayed either in true colour (with **CybergraphX** on third party graphics cards) or dithered with up to 256 (AGA) or 16 colours.

The new **Layout function** allows for precise mouse-controlled selection of printout size and position.

No need for test printouts: The Graphics Print Manager will allow the user to control the results of all changes made to the print parameters (Brightness, Gamma Correction, etc.) directly **on-screen** before printing.

Make your printing dreams come true!

Easy to use:

- ✓ Intuitive and clearly arranged preferences menu. Style guide compliant. May be **hotkey-activated** at any time.
- ✓ **Hard copy function** for fast printing of screens.
- ✓ **Poster function** for oversized printouts.
- ✓ **Compatible** to your existing Amiga software: No difference in printing, except new levels of quality.
- ✓ Will run on every Amiga model with Workbench 2.0 or higher.
- ✓ Supports even the latest **printer models**, such as Canon 610, Epson Stylus Pro/Color II/IIs, HP 660/850.

Press Reviews about TP Pro 4 - "Best Choice"

"TPrint 4 is the new leader in every respect. It is simply the best choice"
Amiga Special 9/95

"Hard copies with cutout-function, poster printing, a comprehensive manual and lots of improvements form an **outstanding printer driver system**"
Amiga Plus 8/95

"The already impressive print results have been further improved, with the new True Match system playing an important role. **Handling could not be much easier.**"
Amiga Magazin 9/95

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Dealer enquiries are welcome!

Shopper**disks**

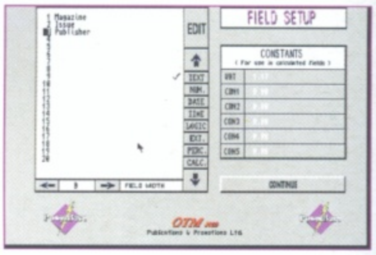
Gosh! There's a lot on offer on this month's Coverdisks. A full database from OTM, a Licenceware demo, two applications given Star buys last month, and more – 5Mb of top stuff!

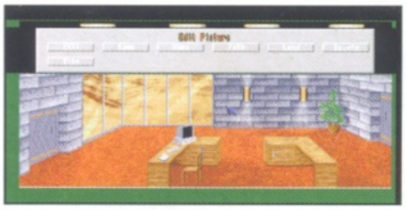


PowerBase 3.4

To tie in with our comprehensive Business Supertest in this issue (see page 28), we have the full version of OTM's excellent database program, PowerBase 3.4, on Coverdisk 1.

The beauty of PowerBase 3.4 is that it can be configured for almost any situation: you can enter, save and retrieve data and then send it to a printer for a hard copy if you wish. You can even include graphic files and then password-protect the information.







GrAC 2

This is a fully usable demo of the Licenceware game creation system from F1 Licenceware. It allows even those with no programming knowledge to create point and click games like Monkey Island. There's a full tutorial room and the player to allow you to try out any room you create yourself. All you need to create your own rooms is a simple paint package like Deluxe Paint. Serious fun.

Shopper**Choice**

It's the choice for the new generation of Amiga users: the ShopperChoice disk has it all.

Technical**Zone**

A full dozen CLI programs this month, with ones to enhance the power of your assigns, take control of your requesters, log your boot-ups and lots more.

Utility**Zone**

There are four utilities here. FastView II is a brilliant update that makes viewing pictures quicker than ever before. Noisome turns your Amiga into a chatterbox, while the tiny WBExtender is one of the best utilities for yonks – it transforms your WB titlebar. Plus! XList offers a comprehensive list of files and their status.

Programming**Zone**

The code for the AMOS tutorial and T.I.M.E., an amazing level editor for game programmers that has been used to create levels for games such as SWOS!

Creative**Zone**

Six utilities for musicians to help play and rip modules from memory.



Information**Zone**

Updated every month, the best guides to PD Houses and User Groups.



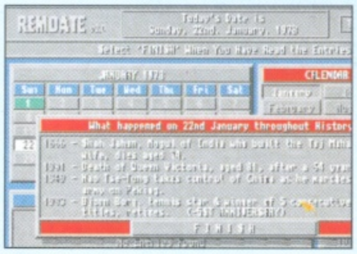
3D**Zone**

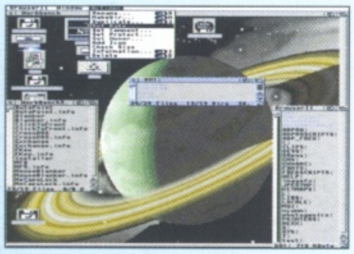
Attention Real3D users! Did you get the full version of Real3D Classic from our sister magazine Amiga Format, but find that you could do with some prepared scenes? Here are two complete scenes to help you get the most from that amazing package.

Application**Zone**

Remdate II

A Star buy last month and now here in its entirety, Remdate II is more than just an electronic diary. It is a full personal organiser that can even help you learn a little history!





Browser II

Getting a blinding 95 per cent in Internet Select last month, this file manager takes the DOpus 5 route and adds power to your Workbench.

